

SANPRIEL

ALVILDE PRYDZ

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The Promised Land

BY

ALVILDE PRYDZ, 1848-1922

Authorized translation from the Norwegian

By *HESTER CODDINGTON*



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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Alvilde Prydz ranks among the foremost literary representatives of Norway. Both Björnson and Ibsen considered her their greatest woman writer. At different times Miss Prydz has been honored by public grants of money, strong evidence of the esteem in which she is held by her countrymen.

Miss Prydz was born on the old family estate of Tosteröd in Southern Norway, where she spent her early childhood. Through her father she is descended from an old German family of nobility, while on her mother's side she is connected with a Danish family noted for its artistic gifts.

At the age of seventeen she accepted a position as private teacher in a minister's family. Following this came a period of study, then teaching again, during which time she made a specialty of music and the languages. Then came a breakdown, the result of overwork.

It was during the period of recuperation that Miss Prydz began in earnest the literary work which was destined to become her life-work.

The first of her works to win international fame

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was *Gunvor, Thor's Daughter of Hærö*, which came out in 1896 (published in England under the title: *The Heart of the Northern Sea*).

It was of this work that Björnson said: "Oh, take this strong book and read it. . . . Here then, at last, are pictured human beings quite different from the . . . jellyfish creatures . . . which are now being served up in literature . . ." He continues, saying that here she characterizes "humanity as it is on the street and in daily intercourse, humanity without purpose or aspiration, humanity in daily life."

What Björnson said of *Gunvor* might likewise be said of her other works, although they differ greatly, both as regards style and method of treatment.

Among the novels which have followed *Gunvör* are *Sylvia*, *The Children of Hærö*, *In Ulvedale*, and *While it was Summer*.

Miss Prydz has produced several plays, one of which, *Aino*, has been presented at the National Theater in Christiania.

The first edition of the present work came out in 1903 under the title, *Det Lovede Land (The Promised Land)*.

The translator wishes here to express her sincere appreciation of the kindly interest and approval which, since the first inception of this work,

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have been so cordially extended to her by the author.

Also, she takes this opportunity to acknowledge the great indebtedness which she feels towards Professor Julius E. Olson, Head of the Scandinavian Department of the University of Wisconsin. She not only thanks him for the advice and assistance which have been at all times so generously given, but particularly she feels that she owes to him a debt of gratitude for having, by the inspiration of his teaching, revealed to her the depth and beauty of Scandinavian thought and literature.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness. . . . And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna. . . . Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell. . . .

For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills — a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates — a land of oil, olive and honey — a land wherein thou shalt eat thy bread without scarceness —

THE FIFTH BOOK OF MOSES

I

But the Lord said: Do you not see that the animal is bleeding, and do you not hear how it shrieks and moans?

But the disciples said: No, Lord, we do not hear it shrieking and moaning.

The Coptic Bible

There they lie in the blue haze, mountain above mountain, a mighty stairway leading up to the heights, where the valley is filled with the green glittering glacier, where peak rises above peak, far up into heaven's light.

There is a brightness up there — the cold glow of eternity. In dazzling lines it rises and fades away, like a distant, alluring land which does not belong to earth.

Down below lies Flyen,¹ which does belong to earth. It hides away enticingly, then rises gently, shifting in its thousand colors, warm and mysterious. In the peace of an early summer afternoon it lies there, shimmering in the bright sunlight, its slopes stretching off toward the horizon like a sea of gold.

The sun wraps his beaming mantle about him and makes ready to depart. The hills below darken. The flowering rush closes its blossoms and veils its green splendor.

But over there, on the broad, billowy slopes of Flyen, all are not yet ready.

¹ One of the plateaus peculiar to the mountains of Norway, with a broad expanse of heath or moor.

The beams play over the heather, the dwarf birch flames up, the bright osier becomes rose red. The air is filled with fragrance. From leaf and branch, from the fresh earth it rises, like the delicate, hidden sweetness of some mysterious secret.

All who live on Flyen know about it. Their minds are full of it. They can think of nothing but the fact that the day has been so beautiful — this first great day of sunshine, with its brightness covering the slopes like a flood. They are indeed reminded, all the little creatures of the fields, that they must open their eyes and their slumbering souls.

It is as if one mighty breath of joy had risen from them all. It comes from the moss, from heath and thicket, from river and lake. It rocks in the warm, soft air, is fused with the light and fragrance, is lost in sound, dies away. For they all know the beautiful secret. A thousand soft voices say to you: Summer is here.

The evening breeze arrives. He wants to know what is going on. He steals over and listens among the grass and heather. Then off he goes into the forest and tells what he has heard.

Over Flyen the sun is sinking.

The slopes seem to move upward as the last rays of light and the shadows together hasten noiselessly over them.

The warm glow in the blood changes. The shadows lose their silvery glow. They no longer move in gentle undulations; silent and heavy, they sink down and are merged together.

Everything grows quiet.

With soft tread sound withdraws.

Cautiously the new moon lifts its horn. A single ray touches it, then passes on. Again it stands there vaguely shimmering.

All is silent — and heavy — and dark.

It is as if some one were going about closing the doors and locking up.

And Flyen slumbers, deep and still, dreaming without fear or regret, while the air spins her silken web about peak and crag, covering the earth with a rare and shining silver tissue, which lies there in the summer night like long soft billows that have gone to rest.

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CHAPTER I

DOWN on the slope toward the lake lies the new Forest Home Hotel. In the evening when the sun goes down one can see it from far up the valley, there where the sun's rays strike it. Even when the whole valley has grown dark it still shines there in the light.

Softly the last beam glides over the lawn. All the animals in the fields stop to listen, for the air is filled with a strange speech. It is the wind as it passes through the rushes bringing a message from the river. It is the far-distant waterfall. It is the deep soughing of the pines in the forest.

But the instant the sun sinks and day dies away everything is quiet. It is a moment of silent reverence. A mighty angelus bell calls the whole earth to worship.

All bow their heads in silence — all except man. He is so intelligent, he knows that the sun goes down every day, so it is nothing but an everyday affair. He is so absorbed in his own noise that he is always the last to become quiet.

For that reason all the animals that could do so have moved away from the fields and hills below, up into Flyen, since the hotel has arrived.

At the foot of the steps stood Marit Hennerud waiting for some one. Mother Hennerud never appeared, but her daughter Marit did the honors for her.

She stood there listening with a smile in her dreamy brown eyes. She heard a carriage below the hill and surmised that it was Fru Thora Thammers with her son and daughter. She could not quite keep the young man out of her thoughts. If she were not too busy she usually fell just a bit in love with each young man in turn as he came. It had become a habit of hers.

Yes, it was they. For the moment she forgot the young man. It was Fru Thammers who became the recipient of the exuberant welcome which Marit Hennerud always prepared for her guests.

"Will you not choose your apartments, Fru Thammers? We have different cottages. I wish they all had names, it is so amusing. Yes, this is the main building, the Land of Goshen. You'd better look around a little first. Yes I must say we are unusually full this year — fine people, almost all distinguished, interesting, or literary, ladies from the best society and noted men, professors and such like. Here you can

see — no, this cottage is the only one where you can't have a room. It is Mount Pisgah. The man who lives here is so utterly — so all the ladies say; but my, how they do enjoy him! There he goes. It is he, Omar Pasha, who has given a name to everything. He won't have anyone else here. He pays for the whole house. Wouldn't you like a room in the Wilderness? That is where our nicest ladies are. No, you won't want this. This is Chaos where there are only young folks. You would rather be with the older people. Now I'll go after the keys."

"Yes, Mamma, it will be much pleasanter for you if Birger and I stay here. But of course you won't care to be here with the young people."

With a pained expression on her face Fru Thammers turned toward her daughter. The words cut her to the heart; and the voice, that clear, hard voice which told everything so plainly — it was strange that she could never become accustomed to it.

"Dear Gertrude, it surely ought to be pleasanter for me in the company of my children," she said, at the same time feeling with bitterness that this was not so.

Just then Birger broke in with a laugh.

"Do you know, Mother, you are a queer one, you certainly are! Now consider, we won't be more than a hundred feet or so away, and your

motherly care will be able to reach us even here. So you can rest easy in the distinguished solitude of the Wilderness."

He stood stretching his legs after the long carriage ride, at the same time trying to bite his small mustache. He was just a trifle stout for a young man of twenty-five. In mild surprise his eyes followed Gertrude, who, with all the time there was before her, had already gone around examining everything in the most energetic way.

Gertrude was tall and erect. In her large blue eyes was a cold, scornful expression. Like her brother she had strong white teeth, very conspicuous.

She came over toward her mother.

"It would be better for you to room over there. It would be easier for you to get acquainted with the old ——"

Fru Thammers was silent as Marit came with the keys. She turned toward her.

"Give me what you have," she said in a low, suppressed tone.

"Yes, I'm sure you'll like it best with the élite. Then I have two rooms here for the young folks. Yes, everything is ready. Supper is waiting. . . . This way, Madame."

A fire of pine logs blazed in the great central

hall with its raftered ceiling. Most of the guests were gathered around the hearth in rustic chairs, or sat on benches along the wall.

Among the chairs there was one, larger and more comfortable than the rest, of heavy oak, richly carved. This they said had been the mistress' chair in the family for over two hundred years.

It was always taken as a matter of course that no one but Fru Thamar Gyllenskjold should sit in that chair.

When she arrived a week before it was as if a great sailing vessel had entered a small sea. Huge waves were set in motion, and all the small boats rocked in the swell.

Even Adjunct De Roch had succumbed; he who that very day had maintained to the young ladies that nature had not granted any special dispensation to woman on account of her sex. And although no one could be more gallant than he, yet at heart he thought that women ought to look up to him with great respect. But in the presence of Fru Gyllenskjold he suddenly became very meek. He not only allowed her to take possession of the chair-throne, and establish a little court as it were, but he took upon himself the position of a sort of steward or upper chamberlain.

As usual, she sat there this evening gazing

about as if everything belonged to her. She sat leaning back, seemingly entirely absorbed in her toy spaniel, the elegant little Princess Leyla.

This evening they were allowed to talk almost as they pleased. Only now and then would one of her brief, witty remarks show with what skill she could turn the conversation in any direction she wished.

Her eyes were like those of a doe, shining and placid, and yet so changeable that if she barely moved they would take on a different expression. People thought there was so much in them, a world of sincerity and goodheartedness; and often, as to-night, a certain dreamy melancholy.

She was really so anxious about her husband, for he was at Karlsbad and was not at all well. It had come to her how much she thought of him after all. Nor was she blind to the significance of his salary and position in connection with her own welfare.

Most of the others were gazing at her. She was certainly magnificent to look upon, as she sat there in her Nile-green velvet gown, with head slightly bowed, displaying the heavy, ash-blond hair arranged in Madonna style.

She sat playing with Leyla's silky white ears. By her side sat Adjunct De Roch, an elegant, red-cheeked blond, with mild blue eyes and a continual little falsetto laugh. His hands were

white and adorned with rings, his smile condescending.

Yet he sat there now in his mild way fulminating against the egotism of the times. He could not endure egotism in anyone, in his wife, or his friends, or anyone else. There was nothing that aroused his anger to such a degree as the egotism of another person.

His wife sat by his side. She seldom said anything. Out of pure good nature she had accustomed herself to remain silent.

The company had gathered in various groups.

Professor Maurus, a big, heavy-set man with a beard that covered the corners of his mouth, walked up and down the room with elevated chin and inflated chest, discussing the reality of matter. He was fond of discussing the reality of matter. If one were only logical then everything was clear.

A slender young doctor walked beside him with noiseless tread, seeming hardly to belong to earth. He was in fact a genius, and looked down upon everything from such a height that in reality he knew nothing of the affairs of this world. His cautious, scientific mode of expression the professor took to be youthful modesty, and it was a great pleasure to him to have a chance to present once more his arguments concerning cause and effect.

Fru Maurus sat in great dignity, her eyes fol-

lowing her husband with a kindly expression of melancholy. For he was wonderful, Maurus, when he was thus explaining the plans of the Creator — but he was not entertaining. Beside her were some ladies who were conversing together.

Fru Captain Fehr always wanted to converse about spiritual matters. She had discovered that her Christian faith was in a bad way and had set herself to right it by joining various associations. She had found herself greatly benefited, but nevertheless had come to the conclusion that religion was something that must not be meddled with too much.

Fru School-director Sahn knew perfectly well that in addition to a noble old nose she had great natural gifts. She had a burning desire to talk about profound subjects. She liked to get someone over in a corner, preferably a man, and keep him there all to herself, while with nervous energy she would pour forth all that she knew about art of the past, of the present, or of the future — about China, Japan, America — about what morality was, and who really were the standard bearers of civilization.

To-night she had to be satisfied with Fru Iversen, Fru Really-Wholesale-dealer Iversen, as one of the gentlemen had dubbed her, because she had once found it necessary to assert her position.

But Fru Iversen was not the worst that could happen. Fru Iversen understood her.

“It must be a wonderful satisfaction, to be able to get into one’s right place in the world — yes, that I can safely say.”

Of course Fru Iversen was right about it, but Fru Liss was just impossible. And Fru Liss was almost always somewhere annoyingly near.

Fru Liss, otherwise Fru Wanda Arescho, was a little beauty with a Cupid’s bow of a mouth and indefinite, half-awake eyes that could at times take on the most soulful expression, without their owner being in the least aware of it, for it was purely a physical accident. Then she had such an exquisite complexion. It was quite the usual thing for the men to lose their hearts to her.

For the moment she was graciously receiving the homage of an elegant young man whom Fru Gyllenskjold had christened Don Miguel de Aranjás, the real name of the wicked Don Juan.

Fru Liss had a reputation among the ladies for saying stupid things; but to the men she always gave pleasure.

Yet even the most observant among them was never quite sure about her mental faculties. No one was ever allowed to say anything unpleasant about her. They found her fascinating and — *ewig weiblich*. Many of them also thought her remarkably profound because she was so charm-

ing. Then she had just the dearest little trick of trying to be shocking, although in a most foolish way; but one could easily overlook that in one who was so charming.

She came to the mountains every summer for the sake of her health, although she was undoubtedly destined for a long life.

At any rate she was intelligent enough to look out for herself. That was her one talent. Her desire for work was satisfied by watching others. She loved her husband. He was such a dear, and he understood her. It was so annoying that he never seemed to think he had time to come up with her. In her eyes he was a very ingenious contrivance which, besides contributing to her welfare in all sorts of ways, also had the faculty of bringing forth in a wonderfully quick fashion anything for which she might happen to wish.

Don Miguel sat twisting his heavy mustache with graceful movements of the hand and gazing at her. How irresistible she was as she discoursed on all those remarkable subjects! For there was nothing between heaven and earth she would not venture to discuss with Don Miguel, although she knew he was so unspeakably learned. But there was one thing Fru Liss could not endure. That was for anyone to find fault with conditions here in this world, and especially in her dear Christiania.

Among other things, Fru von Asten was especially given to doing that. So Fru Liss turned toward her with almost open anger in her big blue eyes.

“My dear, that is really only a woman’s argument. Everything certainly goes along there as it ought to go. Indeed it is our best men who have charge of things, so they are certainly well managed. I thought everyone knew that our professors were most exceptional, quite different from other places for example, where they are only——”

Fru von Asten had no chance to learn anything further on that point, for suddenly Fru Liss stopped. It was not the easiest thing in the world to contradict Fru von Asten. Some unfortunate beings up there had discovered to their sorrow that she resembled a little wild beast. Not even her best friends could be certain that the small claws were sheathed. Even though she might repeatedly call one “My dear friend,” it was with difficulty that she refrained entirely from using her claws. But when she addressed anyone as “My angel,” then all knew that the claws were in full activity.

On their arrival she and her husband, Wholesale-merchant Stern, had been the occasion of much wonderment; in the first place because she had gone back to the good old custom of keeping

her own name, and in the second place because she had chosen her quarters in the main building, while her husband roomed in a little cottage all by himself. By the second day, however, no one wondered any longer.

He had been dubbed Omar Pasha almost immediately. As usual it was Fru Gyllenskjold who did it. No one could tell why, but they all found the name appropriate.

Fru von Asten laughed at them. She thought women were stupid; and as for her husband, she had an unspeakable contempt for him. It would have been difficult for her to tell why, but then that was not necessary.

This evening Fru von Asten was more than usually occupied. She was engaged in conversation with a young engineer, a man heroic in size, with sleepy blue eyes and a light mustache. He posed before her like Mars at rest. It was interesting to watch him. He impressed her.

Above all the confusion and noise were heard the falsetto tones of Adjunct De Roch's voice. He had discovered how simple everything was after all. Human beings were very easy to understand and direct, particularly children. It was merely a matter of giving them a good foundation and starting them in the right direction. They would always be thankful for it. His wife smiled appreciatively.

At that moment Fru Thammers entered the room.

There was a slight lull in the conversation; even an entirely new theory concerning the origin of new stars was checked for the moment.

They knew who she was; the young people had come in before. Yet everyone must have a look at her. One practical soul stirred up the pine knots so that the light of the flame fell on the slender, slightly bent lady who came gliding across the room toward her children.

Some of the near-sighted, learned gentlemen stared at her a moment and discovered that the fine figure was not without a certain charm; but she was no longer young. They missed that irresistible something which appeals even to men of learning, so they returned to their hypotheses concerning the new stars.

Yet there were some who were farther sighted. They saw that she was one of those who needed to be studied a little. Then she became quite interesting. The relaxed figure still moved with something of the suppleness of youth, and in her expression there was the suggestion of a hidden summer, together with a hint of the weariness and self-restraint of age. Her skin was white, without color; her eyes wonderfully clear and translucent, with that far-away gaze which seemed not to see anything close at hand.

The ladies saw immediately that her hair had begun to turn, and that the far-away expression was not at all becoming to her.

Fru Gyllenskjold sat smiling to herself. She was reminded of a closed house. Some day the windows and doors would be thrown open. She thought further: "Has she a lover?" That sort of thing interested Fru Gyllenskjold. She decided to take her up.

In a corner by the window sat Merchant Stern, called Omar Pasha. He also looked at her and noted the quiet face, the soft glance. His eye followed the slow grace of her movements which acted like music upon him. He noticed the mouth — there was an expression, sharp and strained, which seemed to have been carved by suffering. He thought of a voice in the far-distant past, a low, suppressed voice, wonderfully mellow in tone. His glance took in her figure. He leaned forward and remained sitting there, his head buried in his hands. He knew her. He had found her in the white silence which enveloped her.

When Fru Thammers rose from the table Fru Gyllenskjold bade her welcome with her most charming smile, and introduced her to the company.

The Adjunct had to move. Fru Gyllenskjold

wanted the newcomer to sit beside her. The other ladies received her very amiably. When Fru Gyllenskjold took hold of things in that fashion the others followed as a matter of course.

Fru Gyllenskjold looked gayly about.

“Where is Omar Pasha? He is not in good spirits to-day.

Ce jeune Omar, pascha de Negrepont —
Parceque son tigre de Nubie est mort!

I must tell you he is our *enfant terrible*, an example of human unreliability. To-morrow he will probably dance a cancan. Would it please you to tear yourself away from your African dreams and come forth from your corner? Let me confide in you, Fru Thammers, he is deep in contemplation of human stupidity and is going to write a book on that subject.”

The man in the corner came forward with a smile and a bow.

“They say the most wonderful things about me. Who indeed would have the courage to undertake such a work?”

Fru Gyllenskjold laughed.

“This is one of our Pasha’s bad days. It is impossible for him not to grumble.”

Merchant Stern was a man with whom all the ladies fell in love because of his remarkable face. Then, too, he never did anything as others did.

They never knew just what he would do — that was one of his charms.

He was just on the point of answering when his wife's sharp voice was heard.

“There are just four things that I rave over, just four things ——”

But what those four things were was not made known to all, for at that moment Don Miguel sat down at the piano and after a few strong chords broke into a waltz, which seemed to express a weariness with the cold frivolity of the present generation. The ladies thought it charming, and continued to direct their attention toward Fru Thammers.

Now Fru Liss was going to sing. She had promised to do so, but a great deal of preparation was necessary whenever she sang.

Many of the gentlemen became very busy all at once.

Suddenly above the confusion Fru Thammers heard the confident tones of her daughter's voice.

That was a remarkable thing about Gertrude. She was always ready with an opinion, and that a most decided one, on any question that might come up.

Fru Thammers looked up and met the gaze of the bright, inquisitive eyes, eyes that were always looking for the little things, for things that could be criticised.

She and Birger had secured for themselves two of the best seats by the fireplace and seemed to feel perfectly at home. This seemed so strange to her, for she herself sat there like a diffident school girl, her heart oppressed by an inexplicable dread.

At last Fru Liss began to sing. She had an ingratiating little voice. It was said of her that she had so much imagination. She could apparently get something out of everything. With the most mysterious air, as if she were making them all accessory to a plot, or with a voice full of intense longing, she would chirp forth even the tamest words.

She was in good voice this evening, and the clear notes sounded so bewitchingly confidential:

Listen, listen!
If thou darest —
Yes, if thou darest, then listen!

suddenly, with passion:

Oh, would that I had a silken gown,
A white one!

The young people were transported with ecstasy.

Fru Gyllenskjold glanced hastily at Fru Thammers, who sat there in silence, apparently unconscious of the significance of the fact that Fru

Thamar Gyllenskjold had shown such marked attention to a new-comer.

The Dean's wife now came over and sat down by her side. While her husband, with his robust nature, never could conceive of any one going wrong, and therefore preferred to discuss such subjects as the reclamation of bogs, Fru Hemb herself always liked to dwell on the frailties of human nature. She possessed an unchangeable, unfailing source of conversation. She felt it incumbent upon her to give all mankind good advice, the supply of which never seemed exhausted.

She thought Fru Thammers was too pale.

"You ought to drink hot water. It is a good thing for the whole system. And at your age — it is so healthful. Perhaps you don't understand what I mean."

And with imperturbable zeal she began to explain her meaning.

Then came the Dean's sister. She also wished to be friendly with Fru Thammers. She was small, thin and worried looking. After many years' experience with the difficulties of life she had acquired the settled conviction that nothing was as it should be. All her sentences ended in a depressed "but" — for what could she do about it anyway? Now she thought that it would be so much pleasanter for Fru Thammers if nature up here were only different. If they could only

grow roses here; for instance, those great, double yellow, velvet ——

She gazed into Fru Thammers' eyes as though she would gladly go through fire for her sake.

Thora Thammers suddenly rose. Her face was colorless, and her eyes were heavy and looked as if she saw nothing.

“I must go,” she said softly. “Good night.”

Fru Gyllenskjold nodded blandly. Then as her eyes followed her she nodded again as if in answer to her own thoughts. The Dean's wife, although she was so benevolently inclined, could not help feeling that the newcomer seemed somewhat ungrateful.

CHAPTER II

FRU THAMMERS remained standing for a moment on the steps. At first it seemed quite dark, coming out from the glare of light. Gradually the summer evening emerged from the shadows of the mountains, and she saw the outline of Flyen against the sky, silent and mysterious.¹

She found a little path leading from the garden out into the field. Over stock and stone as she stumbled forward in the twilight, it led her up toward Flyen.

"If I can only find my way back again," she thought; then again dully, "What does it matter?"

She went on until she could go no farther. Then she sat down among the heather.

It seemed as if she had known that this was the very spot to which she had wished to come — a place where she could hide away. She sat there looking around, watching that mysterious something which was softly rising and at the same time

¹ The reader must keep in mind the fact that this is in Norway, the land of the midnight sun, where the summer days and the twilight as well, are very long, and the nights correspondingly short.

growing darker, until as she watched, it seemed to close in about her, heavy and silent as the slumbering sea.

Above, the heavens were full of great white swans' wings. Far out to the north lay a bit of gold-flaming cloud. It vanished while she sat gazing at it. Everything grew so big and so solemnly still. The wind and all things slept.

She sat motionless. She thought of the disciple who knelt on the Mount of Transfiguration and prayed that he might make his dwelling-place there in the light. Here in the dark would she pray to be . . . to breathe out her soul . . . to let it stream out over the wild heath, among the silent, sleeping flowers — and find rest.

She continued to sit there silently, as if she never again should move from the spot.

There came a faint sound. It was the wind waking up in the forest. It whispered among the branches and began to tell strange things.

She shivered. Was it cold? The air was mild and soft, and all the earth was wrapped in silence — all except the little breeze. That had begun to rustle about everywhere. It whisked forward, it whisked back. The air was full of it. The small branches swayed, the sleepy little heather blossoms grew big and opened their eyes. They breathed and began to laugh — at her.

A fear came over her. Her breathing quickened.

She rose. She certainly must go back.

She did not know whether she was following a path or not, or where she was going. The dwarf birches seemed suddenly to rise up and stand there moaning. There was something moving among the trees and branches. It sighed. It stared at her with glittering dark eyes.

She hurried on without looking round.

It was the gloom of night — from mountain and hill it came streaming, a flood of darkness. And something was awake there came a stealthy tread behind her the mountain side was all astir ——

She tried to hurry, but it was after her like a sneaking bloodhound. She could hear the deep panting behind her ——

She stopped.

There she stood just where she had sat before she rose to go home.

Was it really she? Yes, it was she, afraid of the dark, distracted and half insane.

How they would laugh at her, the children, her clever, practical daughter! How amusing it would be to them all to know that she, an old woman, was afraid, of what? of the wind, or the heather?

She sat down again in order to calm herself. She caught sight of a lamp just lighted in a little cabin, the outline of which she could barely see. Her fear was gone. She felt only an unspeakable scorn for herself.

They were singing hymns down there. The wind carried the notes away, then wafted them back again. A woman's voice rose like a white dove through the silence, followed by that of a man, heavy and strong, resting on earth.

They were the old hymns:

In Jesus' name shall all our work be done,
and

Jesus, thy memory . . .

Strong and tender, full of faith, insistent in their call, the words came to her like a rebuke.

Had they not followed her through childhood, borne her up as on strong arms, filled her with hope?

Now they come to her again with heavy, solemn tread, and looking deep into her heart they ask: "What have you done to yourself that we can no longer give you peace? Where are you? Once long ago we carried you in our arms."—

The past rose up before her. The tender longings of childhood, the sweet intangible dreams of early youth. She was filled with awe and an

oppressive sense of humiliation, as she thought of the self she had been, and of what she had since become.

She wept softly.

Suddenly she drew herself together as she heard some one coming. She looked up surprised, for this time it really was some one who stood there before her.

It was a woman, small — but as she looked again she seemed large. There was about her an air of majesty that seemed not of this earth, but as if she had come from far away. And the eyes — they looked into hers with unspeakable mildness. They understood.

Thora Thammers rose and grasped the outstretched hand. There was something soothing in the soft, firm touch, and at the sound of the voice something that had long been dead within her rose to life again. She followed her along the path, feeling that she could follow her to the ends of the earth, and farther — even into the heavenly land beyond.

At the entrance to the garden they paused with a soft good-night. Thora Thammers held her hand, wishing that she would speak.

From the hallway flashed a gleam of light. It fell on the stranger like a halo of glory and revealed a graceful figure simply clad, and a pale, worn face full of expression.

Thora stood for a moment without letting go her hand. As she looked into her eyes something from an unknown world met her in that glance.

She wanted to cry out: "Do not let me go. Take me with you into your world of peace."

She stood like a helpless child as she felt the tears rising. With an effort she controlled herself, bowed reverently and whispered:

"Thank you."

On the steps she met Barbo, the housemaid, who was greatly frightened at her being out so late.

She asked Barbo about the strange lady. She was called Madame Harder. She lived down there alone with her maid in a little house near the hotel. There was a sick man in a cabin just below Flyen who had been frightened out of his wits by some traveling preachers, and no one had been able to stop them until Madame Harder went up. Since then they hadn't dared show themselves, for she went up there every single day. And the man was in his right mind again and the doctor thought he would get well.

Late that night when Thora Thammers fell asleep, there came to her a presence with calm, bright eyes, and the room was filled with peace.

CHAPTER IV

A FEW days later, just after luncheon, it was quite lively in the big parlor. All the guests were indoors because it was raining. Most of them were in a sociable mood.

In the corner by the door sat a number of young women all talking at once. They had withdrawn from the rest purposely. They didn't want to be too near Fru Thamar Gyllenskjold, because they didn't like the side glances that she occasionally cast in their direction. Each one of them, in a spirit of independence, had developed her own peculiar variety of slang. They wanted to express themselves more originally than the tiresome old cultured people of the preceding generation.

Among them were students who were doing graduate work, and some young primary school teachers who had a tendency to look upon humanity as a kindergarten placed under their supervision.

Some very young ladies had surrounded a little lawyer. They wanted to know what certain gentlemen in Molde did with themselves on Sunday — yes, on Sunday in particular. They would be

so charmed to meet anyone from Molde. The little lawyer was certainly not from Molde, but he forgot to state that.

A short distance away sat Fru Liss in her red velvet gown. The lawyer sat looking at her hands, delicate little cat's paws with skin almond-white, soft and clear, as if they had just come into existence, and were for the first time busied with something — for just at that moment they were tearing to bits the nosegay of rare flowers that he had brought her.

He had no need to be offended, for it was merely a habit of hers, the result of a mild little taste for destruction. At times it was absolutely necessary for her to tear things to pieces and then get up and stamp on them. Then when she had done so, she would look up in the most bewitching way and say:

“ Oh, I am so sorry, but I just had to do it.”

Anyway, she was angry just at that moment, and it was quite becoming to her. Her whole face took on an expression of soulfulness. Her voice became fuller, with a trembling note which contributed greatly toward establishing her cause.

It was Fröken Hemb who had opposed her.

Fröken Hemb thought that the world was all wrong. It was a sin that so many human beings were in need.

Fru Liss was convinced that everything in the

world was done in the best possible way, and all this want and misery — she was sure that it would be remedied.

Captain Spohr agreed with her.

He sat looking at her as she talked, thinking that her mouth, with its Cupid's bow, was the most deadly weapon he had ever faced. And he didn't like to hear about the misfortunes and evils of this world either. He didn't think people were so badly off.

Fru Liss looked at Fröken Hemb with a certain scorn.

“According to that there would certainly be no pleasure in existence, for ——”

And she turned to the Captain, who for the moment was ready to take up arms in defense of humanity against Fröken Hemb, whose little troubled face was certainly of no advantage to her.

With her feet on a footstool which Merchant Stern had covered with the skin of a pampas cat, sat Fru Thamar Gyllenskjold.

She smiled with her soft-doe eyes and looked very good-natured. She was slightly chilly and admired the beautiful silver-gray fur with the rust-red stripes. To-day she felt that she must pay some attention to Omar Pasha. He sat at her feet beside the hearth and seemed in excellent spirits. She had never seen him more so. She looked at the fine, beardless mouth, with the deep,

heavily marked lines which gave to the face an expression of sensitiveness she never before had seen in a man. Yet the eyes told a different story. They looked so somber as they lay there shaded by the long lashes and the heavy, projecting eyebrows. There was a hard light in them.

For that matter, to-day he was utterly impossible. He heard everything that was said and scattered his own remarks right and left. No one was safe. The ladies had a certain fear of him, but when he was absent they missed him more than they feared him when he was present.

Thora Thammers sat alone in the farthest corner, turning over some engravings.

There were two people at Forest Home whom Fru Gyllenskjold had no desire to bring together. One of them was Fru Thammers.

She was suspicious of her. She would like to be kind to all, but they must not stand in her way. They must listen to her, and at the same time keep their distance. They must not obstruct the view. On the whole she was not sure but that ladies required too much attention. It almost seemed as if some of them wanted her place. Therefore she did not see Fru Thammers to-day; but otherwise she sat there placidly enough in her rôle of sovereign princess, smiling her long, sinuous smile as she listened to Omar Pasha.

On this particular day, since they were both in

such good humor, they were easily amused, even by Fru Iversen's silk-lined gown, which gave Omar Pasha a special opportunity to scoff at the ladies, poor things. He hoped, at least, that she would agree with him that the elegance which one could obtain by producing a sound which reminded one of a rattlesnake was, after all, a very plebeian substitute for the real thing which, by its very nature, was noiseless. Were not the silks of the old days heavy, and soft, and pliable?

She sat listening to him, patiently indulgent, as she played with the silken ears of the Princess Leyla.

Then she tapped him with her foot.

"Omar Pasha is the knight of the white cloud, of the moon, and of the night wind, but not of the earth, that he should take things so seriously, like the Adjunct when he teaches us the rules for the logical comma."

"I beg permission to correct your statement, Your Majesty. I look upon my position in an entirely different way. There is a certain species of ants that has an instinct for keeping house-slaves. You have that same instinct, most powerful lady. The Adjunct and I are merely your house-slaves. Are you still cold? Are you comfortable?"

"Very comfortable, but such far-fetched comparisons bore me."

“It is all a part of the divine plan. I think matters are very nicely arranged, since in that way a very tedious life is shortened somewhat. One ought to be thankful for that.”

“What a peculiar being you are. I am convinced that you believe in nothing.”

“In everything possible, almost — in the wind and the weather, the sun and the moon, and the Bergegubbe ¹ — and I find myself quite in harmony with it all.”

She laughed and shook her head.

“We’ll not bother about these things that we don’t understand. Tell us, rather, what you think of those learned gentlemen over there. Have you also shares in this telegraph line to Mars, or is it Venus? Is there not an astronomer who thinks he has observed signals from there? What do they want of us?”

“There comes my amiable new neighbor, Betsey Schaum, journalist and author. You ought to congratulate her, and the rest of us, too, for that matter, on our acquisition of the right to vote. You haven’t done so yet.”

Betsey Schaum denied most eloquently and vigorously being among those who swelled the number of lady authors.

That would be doing her an injustice. If there was any one thing for which she deserved credit,

¹ Mountain gnomes, creatures of Norwegian folklore.

it was for having lessened their number. This was indeed a secret — except in newspaper circles, where she had the reputation of being a regular executioner — since she hid her bloodthirstiness under a modest little pen-name; and moreover, her voice as well as her whole person gave the impression of a mild and harmless creature.

But no one heard her vigorous protestations.

Some of the ladies in fact had begun to discuss the suffrage question with Omar Pasha.

Then the Adjunct became excited. He had heard that in Sweden they had gone to the most absurd extreme, that a woman could have as many as a hundred votes, a fact which he immediately attributed to the intellectual weakness of the times.

Fru Gyllenskjold paid no attention to him, so he had to address himself to Dean Hemb.

Omar Pasha took it quietly. He sat watching them and laughing with those gleaming dark strips which at times took the place of eyes.

“What do the honorable ladies want with more rights? They have certainly never made use of those that they have. And what can they do in the legislative assembly so long as they cannot improve the laws that they themselves have made?”

Fru Gyllenskjold leaned comfortably back, drawing the fur closer about her feet.

This was just what she liked, to sit here in quiet, listening to the others. It amused her to see so many of the ladies looking so irritated. Princess Leyla lay in her lap gazing about with innocent, wondering eyes, which seemed to scent danger. For at least ten ladies came up demanding an explanation from Omar Pasha.

He laughingly put his hands to his ears.

“What laws? I mean, of course, social laws. Let us call them custom, habit, etiquette, what you will. When it comes to the point, it is after all the women who make them, and it is the women who have the power to improve them, and through them, society; but they never have done so. So long as it does not occur to their sensible little hearts that anything there needs setting to rights, so long ought we to be forgiven if we do not feel the need of their help, for just so long they cannot give us what we need.”

The ladies were accustomed to Omar Pasha's atrocious remarks, but this sounded formidable, as if there were some meaning in it. So they could not let it pass.

Fru Iversen came up with a speed and a silken rustle that reminded one of a rattlesnake.

“Oh, you horrible Omar Pasha! You really mean then ——”

She looked helplessly at Fru Sanders, who

raised her lorgnette and gazed at him with a supercilious smile.

“ I should like to know what it is you really want. Just as if what the men do is so wonderful! Do you mean that they can manage everything alone, the whole thing? ”

“ Your Highness! We are very desirous that the women should join us, for our sake as well as for the sake of the work that has been left undone; but we want them to come, as a Swedish author expresses it, arrayed in all the natural beauty of their sex. That is what we want. My shoemaker is a sensible man. He says, woman lacks in consciousness of self. It is her duty to teach every man to respect her, but she does not do so. Therefore I think we ought to be forgiven if we do not esteem her intelligence sufficiently. It is remarkable what importance can be attached to a trifle when once a precedent has been established, especially by women, and in particular by married women. The other day when Fru Sanders was entertaining, I happened to notice accidentally the different degrees of courtesy the women showed to married and unmarried women. Now we men think such things are absurd. Of course we do the same thing, but it is according to orders. We have been so well taught by you ladies. For my part I think there is good reason to doubt that women are rational

beings, so long as they cannot comprehend that in such ways as this they are first of all insulting their own womanhood. Excuse me, ladies, but it was not I who began this. Remember, it was not I."

Some of the ladies began making preparations to annihilate Omar Pasha.

But now Fru Gyllenskjold raised her long, slender hand, and the others restrained themselves.

"It seems to me you are making a great disturbance here on earth, Omar Pasha. You are prone to evil; now I perceive it. You are worse than Nero or your twin-brother, Ivan the Terrible, for you never waver; you never have any access of mercy, and fortune favors you. Just see, how unhappy we look! You storm about in our little world like a tiger in his lair. Yesterday you freed a wasp from the clutches of an honest spider; you could not even pull the wings off from a fly — and now you sit here amusing yourself at our expense."

She looked smilingly about.

"Over there sits Fru Altor, a lady who in times past has been at court, and who now gives tone to the village which has the honor of being her place of residence. She has asked you ten times if you do not know that what you call our social laws are but emanations from a higher source, from our court etiquette which presumably is

above your criticism. Will it please you to answer her?"

"Your humble servant, lady, has only to add that the entire system of European court etiquette is based on the relics of ancient Oriental barbarism. It is servility which forms the basis of the system. It was Henry the Third of France who had the honor of introducing this system into Europe, and of changing his associates from friends to servants. And is not this a proof of our close kinship to the apes, this thoughtless imitation of an effort to build up artificial barriers, instead of reverently respecting the real laws, those of nature?"

Fru Altor could not find words immediately. The muscles of her face quivered. She limited herself to the remark that she thought the world was becoming very strange.

"Yes, I think so myself, Fru Altor; and the strangest thing of all is just this, that the beau-monde of our time find so well suited to themselves the very customs that were in vogue in far-distant barbaric times. Does not this show the real foundation of our culture? Under cover of what one calls 'good tone' are instituted some very remarkable things."

Fru Liss sent him a glance from her great, wide-open eyes.

"Well, I must say, Herr Ivan the Terrible!

Indeed, we certainly are enjoying ourselves! We are quite carried away. It is particularly delightful when men talk this way — indeed I think it is amusing because it is so terrible to hear you! I and quantities of my friends are entirely agreed upon this, that — yes, you horrid thing you — all this that we consider good form, you positively think it beastly?”

“That would be doing an injustice to the other beasts; they in fact have never sunk so low. Now I really think I had better take my leave.”

At this moment his wife, Fru von Asten, came to the rescue.

“Samuel, I have no idea what you mean, Samuel.”

Merchant Stern did not look at all surprised. Fru von Asten always began that way when she said anything to her husband. It had become a habit with her.

She threw back her pretty little head, and the bright eyes, which at first had looked so mild, began to take on an expression of irritation.

“I believe you think you are a superman!” It came out quickly and decidedly.

“Dear Annie, you mustn't apply that expression to any one unless you wish to insult him. That is, for the time being, our most correct term of abuse. The fact is, my dear ladies, we have made a serious attempt to originate the super-

man, but a new species of plebeian has been the result."

Fru Gyllenskjold again raised a warning finger. "Shall we not light the pipe of peace?"

She looked smilingly about.

"Would it not be easier to control the winds of heaven than to bring a man within the bounds of reason when he is outside? I think that he also is one of the forces of nature that must be overcome. Man did not bring the earth into subjection sufficiently before installing himself in his own position. For the present, therefore, he also belongs to the class of wild animals."

"Quite right, Madame, the instincts of a former period are still in our blood — but I see that it has stopped raining. Ya Allah, ya Allah! God is great! and I think I'll go."——

The sun was indeed shining brightly outside.

Thora Thammers rose, closed the album and also went out. Her daughter followed her to the steps.

"Where are you going, Mamma? It is so annoying that you make no effort to become acquainted with the others, but go around alone all the time. Birger thinks so, too, that it would be much pleasanter for us if you would sit inside more and make yourself comfortable with the old folks. I am sure everyone thinks it strange. People think you are very queer, and it is so an-

noying for Birger and me. Yes, I know, Mamma, you think we ought not to care — you are really clever about it — but we'll just have to, Birger and I, we'll just have to tell the young people, that we can't ——”

Fru Thammers stood looking at her daughter.

“Do you and Birger forbid my going out?” she asked quietly.

“Mamma, you certainly are a romantic old thing; yes, Birger thinks so, too. Old people never do understand the feelings of young folks. We know very well that you think that we run around too much with the young people — but then really we are not the only ones — It is because young people have to live their own lives. Fröken Carn — she is the leader of all the students here this year — she says: ‘I have a right to do just as I please in vacation.’ She is uncommonly daring and free in her nature. Now her mother has some trouble in her knee, and she is glad of it, because she has to keep quiet. Otherwise she would want to go with her everywhere and that is such a nuisance. Fröken Carn says: ‘A mother ought to do everything for her children, but the children really owe nothing to their parents. It is the parents who are under obligation to us. They must take the consequences of having brought us into the world. It will be our turn afterward when we have children.’”

She stopped as she looked at her mother. She cast her eyes down, blushing over what she had just said, for her mother suddenly stood before her, not with her usual submissive air, but tall and erect.

She stood for a moment in silence, looking at her daughter. Again Gertrude lowered her gaze, for when her mother spoke it was not in her ordinary manner.

“I know indeed,” she said slowly, “that you and your aunt have begun to think that my mind is not quite balanced — not another word. You and Birger may amuse yourselves as you please, but you must forgive me if I do not stay indoors just because you two wish it.”

“Mamma, you do misunderstand us so outrageously! Now let me stay with you —”

Fru Thammers smiled sadly, but did not accept the offer.

Something had crept into her voice which set her daughter off at a distance of which she had never before been conscious. She stood there gazing after her mother.

Certainly both she and her aunt and Birger thought — and she was sure that almost everyone up here thought the same thing . . . for she certainly was not like other people . . . It was a nuisance that she had noticed . . . but she really had no right to feel hurt . . . and yet how grand

Mamma could be when she wanted to! Uncle had noticed it at different times, and he had always said that there was good blood in her.

Fröken Carn and some gentlemen came along just then. They wanted Gertrude to go with them for a walk.

CHAPTER IV

FRU THAMMERS went up to her room. Taking a light wrap she came down again and took the path toward Flyen.

She felt it a relief to get away from all those human voices. The air down there seemed full of them, and of little troublesome thoughts and bother about nothing.

Here she could breathe freely. Moreover, there was something she must do. She had long had the feeling that some day she would say to herself: "Now I will look about to see what it really is that I have been doing." And there had come to her this very day a curious desire to rummage about in her mental affairs and find out where she stood.

She would like to tell the whole thing here, to the wild creatures and the flowers, so they might judge her. There was no human being in whom she could confide.

She thought for a moment of the man who had been talking down below. Even that first evening something had stirred within her at the sound of that voice; why, she did not know, only that it reminded her of the long forgotten past, of some-

thing suffered and ended which she did not care to experience again.

She walked slowly.

A hare sat peering at her with placid, innocent eyes. Her foot almost touched it before it sprang away.

“You need not be afraid of me,” she murmured, with a faint smile. “Then I will take your place.”

She sat down. Here indeed everything was close about her. Here stood the dwarf birch and the juniper, the heather and the silver-white willow. How they beamed now that the sun had come!

Yes, she would tell it. She could say it to them. People would think it was because her mind was not quite right. She could not help laughing. It was on the contrary just because she was rational.

It was something to be thankful for that the fine people down there thought there was nothing interesting up on Flyen, for she could have peace here, she and the little wild creatures.

How vast and still it is to-day! Only the breeze comes gliding by on broad, noiseless wings, as if it were all alone under the heavens. She hears its whispering voice. Every living thing among the thousand hillocks knows it. It slips away through the heather, hides and dozes, wakes

again, steals into the hearts of the little flowers and sets them trembling.

“ I can tell it to you,” she murmured half aloud, “ for you are not like the others.”

She lay down among the heather; she was so tired.

She hid her face.

—— Not that, no, not that which now seemed to come before her like a horrible ogre-tale which some one once had told her. For she had forgotten it, or God had saved her from it. She had just reached the point where there was a little comfort in thinking that all that was ended.

She half rose, supporting her head on her hand.

—— But how did it happen that she became that man's wife? She saw him before her, Colonel Arvid Thammers, indolent, self-satisfied, fat, bald-headed. She looked at him in cold wonderment. Was it he? Was it in association with her that he had become such?

She shuddered at the thought ——

She closed her eyes — there he stood before her as he once was, the handsomest man she had ever seen. With his sweet, troubadour voice he had sung himself into her heart. His passionate dark eyes had taken her fancy. She had thought there was so much expression in them.

And her aunt had said that it was the usual thing for a young girl's dreams to be shattered.

She must not think that she was the only one to whom such things happened, but that time would make it all right. She must think of the realities of life. It was there that happiness lay.

So she herself had thought that Arvid Thammers must indeed be the one. It could not be otherwise. . . . And it would all come later, all that she was looking for. It didn't matter so long as there was so much to come afterward. It was always that way, they all said together. They certainly knew best. . . . But she thought so too, that it was best to hurry up and have it all settled. She had been so afraid. It seemed to her that she had stood on the edge of a precipice, but had been saved in some miraculous way. . . . She didn't want to suffer. Why should she? She was only eighteen. She wanted to enjoy life to the full —

She could not bear to think of it any longer. Again she lay down in the heather.

A fear came upon her that she was getting too close to the sore spots in her soul. She knew of something there, a dumb, hidden horror, behind the dark door which led into the land of despair. Yes, she had stood there and listened, to learn if there was any message for her. There had been times when she could find no peace, when it had seemed to her that nothing of all this that she had lived could be true; that it could not be possible

that Arvid Thammers was her husband, and she the mother of the two children who were not really hers, who never looked at anything with her eyes or listened to anything with her ears.

She put her hands up to her face as if to shield herself from something. For many years now she had completely forgotten that she had ever loved her husband — but she had. There was no doubt about that!

She had waited so anxiously at first, for in her heart was hidden a kingly castle. It was for him, but he must find it himself — he must win his way to it.

But Arvid never came. He thought that he possessed all, that there was nothing more.

Then it was that the door was locked, and he didn't notice that either. So she thought that some time there would be a great scene, and matters would be improved. But Arvid had no desire for a scene. He knew perfectly well that she would like to have him different from what he was, but he let it go as if he had noticed nothing. He was always in a good humor, continually laughing and showing his strong white teeth. Serious matters never made any impression upon him.

But what is the use of lying here thinking about all this?

She lay staring up into the sky. Again she felt

that terrible depression. She must talk it over with some one.

“ Listen, heather bloom, little bell, I will tell it to you, so that you may know what I am . . . so that you may not think too well of me . . . and so that you may be kind to me when I come up here.”

She grew strangely excited. She must tell it. She could not get away from it. With a faint, sad smile she lay there murmuring to herself:

“ For I was young . . . and there came a fear which consumed me, that it might never be different. Then there came a hunger for another life, different from the one I was living — I began to dream. . . . I thought that what I was dreaming was more than what I was living . . . so I went one evening to Arvid and said that I was beginning to forget him . . . and I was afraid —

“ But Arvid laughed. ‘ It is no matter to me what you dream.’ ‘ But what if it were not a dream . . . what if it should become the truth that I no longer care for you?’

“ Arvid laughed: ‘ I have you anyway — for that matter there is no human being of whom I am so fond that I could not do without.’

“ A chill seized my heart . . . it settled there. I ceased weeping so much. I became curious to see how it would come out —”

She rose again. She could not keep still. She whispered plaintively:

“No, there is nothing more to it. Why should I bother about it when I am so tired?”

But she could not get away from it. She kept thinking how Arvid went on just as happy as before, and how she began to look at him so differently . . . That troubadour manner which had become him so well, and which she had thought gave evidence of something deeper . . . how it had fallen from him like a worn-out garment . . . and the interests which at first had bound them together, how they finally had been absorbed in the materialism which had grown up in him! He became indolent, acquired more and more an appetite for good things to eat, and began to concern himself with affairs in the kitchen. They all said to her: “How fortunate you are to have a husband who is such a good hand to look after the house!”

But she did not see that — she saw only that their ways had begun to divide. And it seemed to her that she never became any older, but still sat there in her youth. Others about her grew and became fully matured men and women, while she herself stood still.

The young married women said to her: “You don’t understand being married. You don’t know how to make the most of your situation.”

They often had company, music and dancing. Arvid was fond of such things.

She lay staring up at the sky.

Then came the two little children. They seemed so strange almost from the first. Was it nature avenging herself? They grew up resembling their father and their father's family — the same broad white teeth that laughed at everything, the same love of good things to eat.

She felt at that moment a sort of wonderment that the young girl with the clear, cold eyes and the disdainful expression about the fresh mouth could really be her daughter — and Birger, so like his father, with the same stream of careless expressions, good-natured, complacent, of one who early becomes corpulent. They resembled him also in the fact that if there was anything they wanted of her, they could display such an excess of affection as to make one sick at heart.

She drew a deep breath as she brushed the hair back from her forehead.

What was the use of lying there thinking about it all? Perhaps it was not always that way. She wondered if any one ever enjoyed living.

And so, as she had gone about with this weight upon her, she had never been able to remember that she was old, and that life was over for her. It was this, of course, which indicated the weak condition of her mind.

Her children, both of whom were so practical, looked upon her as an old woman, who ought to sit in the chimney-corner at home.

If only a wave might come some time and break over her life, and wash out every trace . . . if the storm as it broke over her head could take her with it and leave no memory behind!

She rose. How foolish of her to lie there in that fashion! What good could it do? It was all over and she had become reconciled. Everything was ended. All that could break had broken. That which had once shone so brightly had gone out in darkness and had become a thing of the past.

They rose before her, those days when the cup of life's bitterness seemed full — ever-memorable, ineffaceable — days that could never come again because she had lost the power to suffer. There was something comforting in that thought. Thank God that she had gotten so far. Now for the first time was she happy.

But a shudder passed through her. Her eyes were full of tears.

It was getting along toward evening.

She lay as before staring up at the sky.

Overhead was a rainbow. It dissolved and faded away. A shower of heavenly blossoms

sank down about her, grew pale, then disappeared. There came a long-drawn sigh from the mountain side.

The forest was always sighing. Or was it the wind, or the river? Or were there spirits in the air that were blending all these low tones together into billows that would roll on and on unceasingly, like her own silent, endless longing that never could find rest.

A faint sound came up from the rushes.

She looked out over the water. It was touched with the red of the rose. Two loons left long streaks behind them as they swam. Their white breasts shone in the sun each time they rose at the beat of the wing.

And the heavens — most magnificent to behold! The flowers were gone; but the animals of earth were there, all clad in rose-color. How noiselessly they moved about, with not a human being, not one to say a single word. That was the best of all.

She lay there staring up at the sky.

One by one the little creatures stole away. Again there came a faint glow. Her gaze followed the horizon. She saw the great profile of the mountains against the sky, and the heavy stone face of the giant who had lain down to rest on the soft green of the mountain side, with his mighty

head sunk low. How she enjoyed it, all this peace and harmony of nature ——

Is that some one coming? What does any one want here?

It was Madame Harder who was coming from the sick man. She passed her, then turned, saw her and smiled. There was something in the glance which moved her. It seemed to say: "Arise and go. Be sound and whole again."

Thora Thammers bowed her head.

Then she lifted her face again, followed her with her eyes as long as she could, and listened, although she knew she had not spoken. She had merely looked at her.

"Yes," she murmured finally, "I will."

Again some one approached. A dog came bounding toward her. She looked up and met his wild, dark eye.

"Be still," she said quietly, "I am your friend."

He snuffed around, wagged his tail, then bounded off again, returning in a moment with his master.

She saw that it was one of the guests from the hotel, the man with the strange voice and the insufferably light manner of speech. She became involuntarily prejudiced against people who laughed so much, and his easy way of taking everything had irritated her.

He stopped in front of her and spoke:

"Who is this wandering about on my Flyen? So this is where you hide yourself. Yes, the hall here is spacious and has a lofty ceiling."

She answered with a faint, absent-minded smile and waited for him to pass on. But he remained standing there.

"Wolf, come here. May I present a friend of mine? He is of good family. He is named for his great grandfather who was a wolf. You can see he betrays his origin, which never descends in a straight line. It is remarkable how you seem to have found favor. As a rule he does not like ladies."

He sat down.

"I hope I have your permission?"

She did not answer. She wanted to rise and go away, but he did not look at her, so she remained where she was.

"You are right, Madame, in coming up here where it is so pleasant. Very few come here. Either they go on up higher and count the mountain peaks and church towers, or else they go to the Falls. Painting the Falls has become an epidemic. There are about twenty ladies sitting there now painting, not to speak of the men and the children."

He turned toward her with a smile.

"You do not say much, Fru Thammers, but

you are observant. I have noticed that, at different times down at the hotel. You look at me with the air of a keeper in a zoölogical garden, as much as to say: 'You know very well you ought not to tease the animals.'"

She said nothing but wished that she had gone.

He continued gayly:

"Perhaps you are up here studying the fauna in private?"

"I know nothing about it."

Her voice was constrained. She regretted that she had not gone immediately.

"It would be a pleasure to me to help you get your bearings. There are some well developed specimens here, in particular among the younger ones. Have you noticed the young people with whom we are blessed these days — those remarkable creatures who go about saying 'namely' or 'simply,' and think that that is the whole thing? Have you not observed what a ridiculous appearance they make with their boldness of manner and almost utter lack of training and refinement? On their brows is stamped a certain kind of plebeianism, by the grace of God, and they go about proud of it."

He turned again and looked at her.

"It was certainly different in the old days, up here as well as elsewhere. Now it is a matter of beves of young ladies who make mountain expe-

ditions unsafe, and life here in the hotel most strenuous. One's mind goes back to the past when fine young women were more often to be seen than at the present time."

She looked at him hastily, flushing crimson. Had this anything to do with Gertrude or Birger? Why had he come to her with all this?

"I . . . I know nothing about it," she murmured. There was something about him that disturbed her.

"I beg your pardon, Fru Thammers. You are not used to my abominable habit of talking all sorts of nonsense."

He rose and stepped nearer.

"You are very near-sighted, Fru Thora Thammers, and you are very forgetful. Likewise you are easily satisfied. You have been content to take my title of Pasha. You have not once made an effort to find out who I am. Do you know me now?"

She sprang up from the stone on which she was sitting. She stared at him. As she stared a gray pallor overspread her face. Her lips trembled with uncontrollable emotion.

The man with the voice — she ought to have known that it was he. She saw the deep lines around the sensitive, mobile mouth — the power in his eye — now for the first time she recognized him.

Must she pass through all that experience again? Like a tongue of flame the thought flashed through her mind, carrying with it overpowering anguish.

All that for which she had fought so hard — no, never would she allow it to be wrested from her.

A cold, hard expression came over her face. The low, flexible voice grew restrained.

“No! I do not recognize you.”

“That is remarkable. I always admire people who forget. It is indeed plausible, for it has been some time — seven, eight, twenty-eight years. I know I have changed a good deal.”

His voice sounded friendly, as he spoke with an easy gayety.

“Allow me to inform you that my name is Samuel Stern, and that I am a wholesale merchant, a very poor one for that matter. Have I permission to make your acquaintance, as it were from the beginning again? It would interest me.”

She turned away. A slight tremor passed over her. She would pretend that she had not noticed that he had addressed her and would quietly go her way.

But she was obliged to sit down again. She could not go.

He continued good-naturedly, genially:

“It is really quite comical — you from Bergen,

I from Christiania; yes, just like any other ordinary event. Is the Colonel coming?"

"No."

She saw Adele Harder's figure as she came into sight at a turn in the road, just before going into a small cottage. She must talk about something else.

"Who is she? Does she live there?"

"Yes, that is her little home. We call it Casa Santa and she herself is our Beloved Mother, our Saint. She resembles the Donna Velata, you know, the original of the Sistine Madonna."

He thought it was a good idea to talk of something else and continued:

"She comes up here in the summer-time to rest; but all who are in trouble go to her, so she gets no peace. She has her property where she has made a home for friendless children. She teaches them how to plant and care for trees, and how to cultivate the land, and to learn from nature and to become men. The élite here feel that they must be careful not to show her too much respect, for they think that she is poor, not married, and not of a good family. But she ignores their vulgarity. Not even with the tips of her delicate fingers could she reach them in their commonplaceness. The distance is too great. When she comes near I always feel like kneeling.

“Have you noticed her big blue eyes? They remind one of English violets; but there is an inspiration in them, and a dream of something greater than English violets. They dream that the evils of this world can be overcome. Have you talked with her?”

“No.”

“Well, she talks very little, mostly with those who are in trouble. Do you talk with the other ladies?”

She sat half turned away, her eyes avoiding his gaze.

Suddenly she looked at him with her far-away, troubled expression.

He turned from her and whistled to his dog.

Smilingly he addressed her, saying:

“You wish me to go.”

He started, but turned back a step:

“Don’t stay too long. It is strange here at night. Flyen is oppressive.”

CHAPTER V

SHE continued to sit there, stupid, no longer thinking.

The mountains still lay in a luminous haze; but suddenly the great space seemed to grow smaller, to contract. Something heavy settled down. A black streak moved over the water. All at once it grew cold.

She began to feel chilly. Should she get up and go on — lose herself in the mountains for instance? Or should she go down and put herself to bed like any ordinary old woman who knows what she owes to her children?

She rose. Yes, of course! Especially since she had settled it all anyway and had decided not to bother herself any more about the affairs of this world.

Just as now the heavens, so had everything else closed in about her, the horizon continually growing smaller. Now there was left merely a narrow strip of all she had once thought so large. So she would withdraw into herself and live her little life in peace.

She went slowly back to the hotel. She had a cup of tea brought to her room. This she drank

in a preoccupied way, then undressed and went to bed.

A long time she lay listening to the clock as it struck, hour after hour, until it seemed to her that she was asleep; but she must have been awake, for she could hear the soft swish of the pendulum out in the hallway. Then she knew nothing more — only that she was being borne on swift, noiseless wings up through her bright youth into the radiance of spring.

She was a child and was walking about in the meadow. The forest in its bright green dress stood close around. The silken grass swayed about her in long, darkening billows. The cuckoo was there, and in the distance she could hear the wild dove — while the swallows whistled by. . . .

It was the time of the wild flowers — the valley was filled with their fragrance.

And she was so happy over everything.

She walked along thinking — wonderful new thoughts. The air became golden. She wandered about in that golden light. Then it came to her, the Dream of Life. She was so happy and so strangely stirred. Now she knew how it would be with her when she grew up.

She sat down in the grass and wept — everything was so solemn. The sun went down and the whole earth was like a castle of gold —

It was in the old garden.

They sat under an arch of jasmine. The great white petals fell like snow. The air was heavy with the sweetness of the white snow. And they sat there. Everything was so still and white that neither of them could speak. He cut her name in the old tree.

"Come," he whispered, "let us go out where the linden sheds its fragrance, under the blossoming arches, into the evening red. We own it all."

She saw his bright, tender smile, the sensitive mouth that trembled as his eyes darkened. He asked:

"Why do you love me?"

She did not know ——

Never before had the cuckoo sung so sweetly.

It had been raining. They were walking through the steaming meadow. Under cover of the white mist the flowers were fairly rioting. It was like a skirmish on a plain.

They stopped to look at them. They had to laugh. The red clover was making a great disturbance, although it was the fault of the white clover, which had shed its perfume so profusely that it had gone to the heads of the other flowers.

It was early one Sunday morning. . . . They

went a long, long way. It seemed as if they could not turn back.

There was a rustling in the ripened corn. The air was filled with the music of the birds. They stood staring up into the dazzling blue, where the lark, and the light, and the joy all swam around together.

They had to laugh, for they were so happy.

When they came home all the church bells were ringing.

It was like a consecration.

At home they all said: "Look at him. Just look at him now. He is not the one for you." And they talked about how he went back and forth and wasted his time.

She did not understand them, any more than if it had been the wind talking as it flew past. For when he was there and she saw him, she did not know how he looked. And she could not know how he used his time, for when he came time stood still.

She only knew that her soul within was bathed in a nameless glory. Flowers were falling—white, so white—and shedding their perfume about her.

There was nothing for her to do but to sit quietly and accept it all. She wished for nothing,

not even that he would come; for he was indeed always near.

She did not understand what the others were talking about. She understood only that this was life as it must be for her. It was the dream she had dreamed that time in the golden air, so long ago ——

It was winter. She was freezing. She had forgotten to put on her wraps. Her soul was full of anguish. She herself wanted to go and see if it were true, that when he left her he went to a young actress who was there playing a guest rôle. Her brother tried to comfort her by saying that when she went away that would be the end of it, for she was there merely as a guest. They tortured her still more at home.

And he *was* there. So they were at dinner? But he must come out; she must have a word with him.

Then he came and his face turned white.

"I merely wish to say good-by," she said. He wanted to go with her.

"No," she said, "my brother is with me."

And she went.

At home they were all glad. She must start early the next morning on a trip to Bergen to see her aunt. They arranged everything for her ——

Then began her wandering in the wilderness. But she never could get any water from the rock.

She had such an insatiable thirst. It permeated everything, hands, feet, heart, and soul; a silent, consuming thirst, unchangeable as eternity; an anguish which devoured her; a yearning cry for life, for the life she had not had a chance to live.

She slept heavily. The morning sun shining in her face did not waken her, nor the noise on the stairs.

Gertrude sent the maid in twice, for her mother had promised to help her with a dress on which she wanted to make some alterations before the dance that evening.

Now Gertrude herself came, somewhat vexed.

"You surely must be sick to-day, Mamma. I have depended upon you. They are waiting for me now for our morning walk."

"My dear, you may rest easy."

Fru Thammers raised herself in bed and rubbed her face hard.

"I was only dreaming. I had forgotten that you existed."

Gertrude saw the rare smile that flitted over her mother's face and felt offended.

"I certainly believe it; but the worst of it is about the dress ——"

“Go, my child, I will surely ——”

But Gertrude was already half-way down the stairs and her voice sounded almost tender.

“You are awfully good, Mamma, but they are waiting for me below.”

Fru Thammers brushed the hair back from her temples.

“How I hate all this!” she whispered vehemently.

She bowed her head in her hands and sat there rocking back and forth as if in bodily pain.

The clock struck. She pulled herself together, got up and dressed. She stood a moment gazing with a grim smile at her reflection in the mirror. Then she went down to breakfast and afterward set to work on Gertrude’s dress. She took her sewing out on the veranda which ran around the house.

Merchant Stern came along with his wife.

“Good morning, Fru Thammers. May I present my dear wife Fru von Asten — ah, and here is Fru Really Wholesale-dealer Iversen.”

Fru Iversen tapped him on the arm with her work-bag.

“You are — yes, Heaven knows you are — yes, fortunately Iversen is as real as any one can be, and I am really glad of it. But you are ultramontane.”

What Fru Iversen meant by ultramontane she

could not exactly explain, but that was never required of her. With a gracious and amiable glance she came up the steps of the piazza.

"Really it will be very nice to sit here and chat a while with you."

She took out her work.

"For here it is really so . . . yes, don't you think, Fru Thammers, yes, what was it Iversen said about the view here yesterday, it was so striking. . . . Iversen, come. What was it you said yesterday about the view?"

But Iversen did not hear. One caught only a glimpse of a ponderous figure in light dress disappearing over the edge of the hill.

Merchant Stern had also disappeared. The gentlemen were going bathing.

"And so you were out last evening. What do you think of the sunset, and so forth? Iversen always thinks it is so harmonious and clear, and Heaven knows that it is really true."

Fru von Asten had settled herself and unrolled her embroidery.

She sat on the other side of Fru Thammers who, with a pink spot on either cheek, was sewing vigorously.

Fru von Asten's trim little head with its shining eyes was constantly in motion. She began to talk; but her share of the conversation consisted entirely of brief questions.

She was industriously embroidering a lunch cloth. Her hands were large, white, and supple. The pretty face had an expression of refined brutality, with certain lines which indicated that a storm might easily happen wherever she might be.

At times the fierce light of passion would glow in her eyes, as it did even now while they were sitting there so peacefully employed.

Fru Thammers had the same experience as the others. Now and then she had the feeling that she was being scratched, and so she was. Fru von Asten could not restrain herself, although she sat there with her most pleasing smile and was apparently very friendly toward Fru Thammers. She was always interested in the peculiarities of a newcomer. By that she meant their faults.

Fru Iversen looked somewhat disappointed.

Fru Thammers was not sufficiently interested in fancy work. She would like to know how her home looked. There was apt to be something a little bit unfeminine about ladies of that sort.

Fru Thammers rose. She thought it was getting warm.

Fru Iversen rose also.

"Dear me! Iversen! I had really forgotten Iversen completely. . . ."

They all agreed that they had sat there too long.

Fru Thammers went up to her room and continued her work, with a feeling of thankfulness that she had the right to be alone there.

The dress was ready. Gertrude was charmed with her mother that day.

“Of course you will come in this evening and watch us dance. Do you know, sometimes I think it is more fun to sit still and look on, for there is always some one that you can laugh yourself to death over.”

Fru Thammers looked at her daughter with a faint smile.

“You have not changed much. The day you were eight years old you said about the same thing. It was the first time you ever had a party. You stood looking at them all so scornfully, and when I asked what you were thinking about, you laughed and said: ‘Oh, I’m just looking for those that get mixed up, for they are the most fun.’”

She sighed involuntarily, for she could still remember how painfully she had been shocked by the expression in those clear, childish eyes.

Gertrude turned abruptly away.

“Well, that just shows that even at that time I had a bit of understanding of human nature. But you will come later, Mamma? Birger? Yes, Birger is getting ready. Haven’t you seen him to-day? No? Birger is so busy. The

morning is just about the worst time, and in the evening we have our Young Folks Club, you know. . . . Yes, he is one who maintains that he should be care-free in vacation. I must go and dress now."

Fru Thammers gazed after her daughter, then began putting away her sewing materials. Suddenly she stopped, letting her hands fall.

What a miserable creature she was! What had she accomplished in the world? She had not even been able to bring up her children properly. The same weeds that had sprouted with the plants when young, she now found beside the fully developed and grown plants. And she had been able to do nothing, not a thing.

After all she was sorry for her husband. He was to be pitied for having married her.

She felt it keenly; for she had striven honestly all these years, but had not been able to create a home. There had been no altar with its sacred fires kindled by the tenderness of love, by the silent understanding of the soul. Gray days alone had been the result of all her effort.

In about four weeks she would be going home again. Arvid would receive her in a most friendly way. He would kiss her and would be very properly pleased.

And she? She shuddered. She herself did not understand why she no longer could endure

him, why her ability to adapt herself to him seemed utterly exhausted.

He would tell her all sorts of things about the Club, and how the meals had been, about Karen's roast beef, which was so good. He often had difficulty in expressing himself; then he would just laugh instead, so she had accustomed herself to laugh also. It pained her to think how they would sit and laugh together.

Then the aunts and the other members of the family would all come in. It was when she was with her husband's people that she felt her faults most of all. That peculiarly cold atmosphere which enveloped them irritated her like something scratching the skin, and always made her feel her weaknesses.

And she had been so lonely with it all. She had thought she could no longer endure that loneliness, right in the midst of those nearest her. None of them had been able to understand it. They had wanted to cure her of that foolish nervousness.

"You have so much to live for," they said.
"You have your husband."

"Yes, that is true. I have my husband."

"And you have your dear little children."

"Yes, I have my little children."

And she had felt so ashamed of herself, as guilty as a criminal ——

After all, what had she to live for? She really had no one, not a single human being. Arvid, the children, all seemed so far away from her. Once more it came over her, the strangeness of it all.

Music floated in at the window, mingled with noise and laughter.

She could hear Gertrude's voice and Birger's loud, unrestrained laugh. Involuntarily she thought of Arvid.

What was this anyway that she thought she could no longer endure? Of course she could. So many others had endured worse things — why shouldn't she?

The clock struck one. The company below was breaking up. The yard was filled with merry, boisterous people.

She listened for Birger's voice. Had he drunk too much again?

She heard Samuel Stern's laugh. It approached the house. What was he doing here? Of course he was escorting the ladies home.

Her heart seemed to contract at the thought of his happiness. Why should he not be happy, he as well as the others? The truth was that she had become a miserable wretch.

Gertrude came rushing in.

"You have not put out your light, Mamma! I thought you must have forgotten it."

“What! haven't I? I thought all the time I was lying here looking out into the dark. How did you enjoy yourself?”

“Oh, hugely! You may just believe that Omar Pasha was in great spirits. He made all the young girls fall in love with him . . . yes, all of us. And it is a good thing too, for he has been carrying on so in other directions. Fru Gyllenskjold — she thought she had him for that matter. You needn't look so disgusted, Mamma, for he is a remarkable man; and it is such fun to see how he manages to make others fall in love with him.”

“I think you misunderstand Merchant Stern, my child.”

“No, Mamma, I think it is you who don't understand such things. That passionate, romantic love which was the fashion in your day — we have broken away from I am glad to say. We amuse ourselves but don't allow our hearts to break. Papa always says that is the only way to do. I shall sleep like a top — Birger? Yes, he has gone to the Club. I can say good night for you — No, he didn't say anything about it, you know he always has so much on hand. Now I'll put out the light.”

Fru Thammers lay down. Now she would go to sleep. But her mind was on Birger who was always so busy and who felt the need of being care-free, not alone in vacation.

What concern was it of hers if Samuel Stern was fortunate and happy? She, from the depths of her degradation, had no right to scorn any one. Yet she felt a great desire to scorn this man — him alone.

Now was this going to keep her awake?

“Who will pray for me that I may sleep,” she whispered.

She thought of a little poem, the delicate rhythm of which had often soothed her. Then came the spirit of the poem itself who

“Took the thought and whispered:
Peace be to thee in thy sleep.”

CHAPTER VI

A WEEK had passed with a great deal of rain. Then came a radiant day when everyone, man and beast, sought the open air, thus giving opportunity for the most wonderful things to happen.

Blakken, the good old dairy horse, got into the hallway and amused himself by tearing the finery off the ladies' hats. Then Fru Liss, who was sitting on the veranda, entertained herself by giving valerian to the kittens.

In passionate joy they licked the bowl, rolling it round and round again, until their exuberance reached such a pitch that she grew frightened and called to Sjur, who was just starting out with the flocks. Sjur came and all the live stock with him.

"Pussy, pussy . . . come now, you poor things ——"

There was the little white bell-wether. She took it by the collar.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

For here came the billy-goat, head down. She shrieked. Sjur came forward with a protecting air.

“ You needn’t be afraid, he just does that for fun.”

Then came the calves, Red Star and Gold Crown.

“ You needn’t be afraid,” he said again, “ they won’t hurt you.”

He looked at the fine city lady in quiet scorn. Such people had so little sense.

Sjur was a red-haired, freckled boy, so ugly that his face was almost interesting, but with a mildly clever expression and a silent longing in his glance. He was the only one of the people thereabouts whom Fru Liss could in any way understand. He had almost learned the city speech.

It had become the custom among the guests there to get him to tell stories, and Sjur had no objection to associating with the city people. His ever fresh, insatiable curiosity concerning the outside world made him exceedingly obliging.

So, in order to get Fru Liss to tell something afterward, he began to relate the story which she always wanted him to give in detail, the story about Rosebloom. At that moment Don Miguel came up. He was among those who had no appreciation for Sjur’s stories. So Sjur had to go without getting his pay, for Don Miguel, as he twisted the ends of his long mustache, craved permission to accompany Fru Liss to the Falls. She

had promised one of the artists that she would be on hand to pose for a picture.

The hotel was almost deserted. Even the old ladies were nowhere to be seen.

When Fru Thammers came out she stood for a moment in surprise. The bright sunshine over all, added to the fact that there was no disturbing human element in view, filled her with quiet joy. There was not a living thing in sight except the wagtails on the roof, and the two tame crows which were eating their breakfast in the kitchen entry.

She went up on Flyen.

It had been a sort of sport with her to look for places where no one went except Sjur with his flocks.

At times she followed the sound of Sjur's flute. It amused her to talk with the clever little boy, and to listen to him as he wandered about with his flute, picking out airs and dance tunes. Some of these he had learned at the hotel, others he had gotten from the Bergegubbe, or the elves; and others still he had evolved from his own youthful fancy out there in the solitude of great Flyen.

She loved to sit and listen to the plaintive minor strains, in silent understanding with all around, yet voicing the intense longing of a soul.

It was interesting to watch the goats. When they heard the flute they would turn their heads

and come nearer. Sjur knew that they liked the elfin tunes best, just as he knew what she would rather hear.

Now she went over and asked for it.

“Is it true that you learned that of the Bergegubbe?”

Sjur looked at her with his honest eyes while he told how he had seen him plainly sitting on a stump and playing an air on his flute; but as soon as he got right in front of him he disappeared. Then he went home and learned to play the same thing on his flute.

And it was really true that another time Thor Andrastaeter came upon just such a Bergegubbe when he was stealing his hay. But he was a very practical fellow and he thought: “Now I’ll just put a stop to this.” So he pulled the hay away from him; but the next morning when he got up he was so lame that he could hardly walk. Syver Jotun had been out and had taken revenge on him.

No, it was easy enough for any one up here to hear them singing in the mountains after sunset. Or if any one wanted to come up after midnight he could see flames coming out of the mountain, and a green light over every stump where they were.

But now Sjur wanted to know about the Boer War and how long the Lord had decided to let such things go on. Also he wanted to know how

kings and presidents were killed, and what science was good for, and if it might happen some time that men would reach the moon, and why it was that people no longer lived nine hundred years, as they did in Methuselah's time.

There were many other things also that Sjur wanted to know; and the goats, which are the most curious of all animals, also came up, while the sheep and the calves wandered peacefully around nibbling the grass.

But the information that little Sjur received was not always satisfactory. He was continually strengthened in his belief that city people hadn't much sense.

So it suited Fru Thammers very well when finally the stock wandered farther on and Sjur had to follow them.

She remained sitting there. It was so restful to have no thought for any of this world's affairs, just to watch the little animals as they wandered about with no concern except to live. She too, it came to her, had for the first time learned to live, up here on Flyen.

She wondered how any one could torment oneself as she had done. Was it perhaps because the sun wasn't shining?

And what peace was there! Softly it came streaming down from the long, silent ridges on

the mild, billowy air, on the golden beams of the sun ——

She knew not how time passed. Along the horizon the sky grew red, and above the ridge hung the dusk of evening.

There was a long-drawn sigh. The stillness of the forest came out and settled down about her. All grew dim, and deep, and solemn. The silent God who wandered there among the trees, was he bringing her secret help, a hidden strength? Or was it welling forth from the depths of her own soul?

She recalled something she once had read about St. Francis: how he lay outside one cold winter night, praying and struggling against his sinful melancholy and his unrighteous longing for the world — when suddenly, from the thorns with which he had been crucifying his flesh, roses sprang forth; his clothes were transformed and shone like the snow about him.

“Holy Francis, when you reached your heaven did you not learn that it was a misconception, the idea that the world did not belong to you?”

How all human beings, the greatest as well as the weakest, possess the faculty of deceiving themselves! Would it always be so difficult to understand?

After all she was sorry for no one. The needs

of humanity moved her no more than the misconceptions of St. Francis. She felt cold and hard. It did her good. It was as if she had been sick for a long time and finally had gotten well again.

Now she must be careful so as not to have a relapse.

She saw Samuel Stern approaching. She had scarcely seen him for a week, and had indeed been thankful for it. She was most thankful for that of which she saw the least.

She returned his greeting and then thought she would go, but she did not.

There was something about Samuel Stern which impelled people, without a word from him, to do involuntarily as he wished. Now he desired that she should stay.

He sat down on a stone opposite her.

She thought: "I am glad I have nothing to say. I will not talk."

"Here you sit amid all the splendor of Flyen," he said, smiling. "You must be a bird of passage. One never finds you where you were seen last."

She moved a little farther away. There was something in his voice, with all its mellowness, that hurt her, that cut like a knife. It was, of course, her unusual sensitiveness to voices, nothing more.

He smiled again.

"Pardon me, I did not hear what you said. Do you know, when you sit there so silent, you look just exactly as though you had said something. And that is quite right, since after all you say more than when you speak."

"Yes, I know I am stupid."

"Nevertheless you are missed down below. Yes, you know one always prizes most highly what one lacks. When you are there the people think very rightly that you are stupid; but when you are not there they inquire for you."

She did not answer.

He came a little nearer. His voice took on a different note, a deeper tone.

"Last year my mother was up here. She did not talk with many people either. It was my fault. I begrudged it."

Thora Thammers leaned over and plucked a blade of grass. A tremor ran through her.

"Your mother!" she said softly.

"Yes, I have a mother."

She turned her gaze away. She dared not talk with him about his mother. No, they must talk of something else. But she could think of nothing else except to ask if he spent much time on Flyen. She did not think it suited to him.

He laughed.

"Why should I not walk on my own Flyen? I am lord of Flyen, especially at night. Then

here I am myself again, that is, my earlier self. In fact, it is here that all my dead selves come together."

His voice had changed again. She looked at him.

"Yes, one ought to take all sides of one's person into consideration. In the daytime I go about among the flesh pots of Egypt, taking all that I can for myself, and I am myself. At night I come up here and roam about, quite another person, yet still I am myself."

"Is it you who ——"

"Yes, it is I whom you see coming down at daybreak. At times I have seen you standing at your window. I wander about up here and peer into the Promised Land."

"*The Promised Land*," she repeated softly. "Once on a time I dreamed about that."

"But I have seen it. For that is what I call the view from here, that is, to myself, in greatest secrecy. I tell you only in the strictest confidence. Don't repeat it."

He glanced at her as she sat there, with the pained expression about the mouth, and the big, silent eyes.

Then he continued:

"That is since last year when Mother was here. She sat looking at the view one evening. It was difficult for her to get about, but she had gotten

up here. It was such a triumph we both thought. She turned toward me. In her eyes I saw that intense longing which I had seen before at times.

“ ‘It is beautiful,’ she said. ‘Not for you, but for me it lies there as the unattainable, that shining land up there—a picture of all that I have longed for. It lies there like *the Promised Land*, which I shall never enter.

“ ‘But I have seen it,’ she said and smiled. ‘I have seen others go in, and I have dreamed that some time they will reach there, the many who have brought happiness to me.’

“And she looked at me: ‘I am hoping for you, my boy, that you may enter in. Remember, you must go farther than I have.’

“Then I humbled myself. I knelt before my beloved mother and looked into her bright blue eyes, with their expression so sorrowful, yet strong and undaunted. I asked: ‘Can you tell me, Mother, why the Lord did not take Moses up on the wings of an eagle and bear him into the promised land? Yes, like an eagle should he have spread out his wings and borne him along, for it is written that he was great and the meekest of all the earth. And can you tell me, Mother, why he has closed this land to you? For you are strong like Moses, and yet more gentle than any one I know.’

“Then my mother laughed at me. She always

laughs when I say such things, but I know that they are true.

“This year she did not come; but in remembrance of the fact that she was here, I have named the little house where we lived together and where I live alone now, Mount Pisgah. It faces toward the east. From there I can look into *the Promised Land*.

“The others go up there, but I do so no longer. I prefer to come where I can look in.

“Now I have told you a little about my mother. I have never talked with any one else about her.”

Suddenly he changed, and in a jesting way:

“Yes, for you know, of course, you are considered such a ‘noble’ sort of person.”

As she listened a pallor overspread her face. The sound of his voice as he stood there — she closed her eyes — brought back to mind all the dead and forgotten past.

Again she was hurt by his change in tone. She could not follow his mood, and his lightness of manner irritated her as she took his jest in earnest.

“No one must believe that of me. Why should I be called noble?”

He laughed.

“No, I agree with you that you have no legal claim to be called noble. Do you know my wife? She thinks people are always full of faults.”

She did not answer immediately. It was at

least a satisfaction that she could sit here so quietly and talk with this man. It was like making his acquaintance over again. And about his wife? She would be glad to talk about her. It was with a certain sort of curiosity that she turned toward him again.

“It is very nice that you have your wife with you up here.”

“Yes, it is indeed. She looks after my faults and runs down my illusions. Such things are good for one, although for that matter, it does not affect me particularly. For, as Goethe says, what kind of a man is it who would dare complain about himself? And that marriage may be slightly uncomfortable was discovered before our time. For the rest we are a very sensible married couple. We talk together very little. In fact we have the faculty of conversing at a distance. My wife never answers what I say, but what she thinks I say; and she very willingly assumes, as people say, that it is foolish.”

She looked at him intently.

Why was he telling her all this? She had always been such a simpleton about taking everything so seriously. It didn't trouble him the least bit. He was just amused by it. Nevertheless it annoyed her.

“I think your wife is very charming,” she said, in order to say something.

"Of course she is charming. She has eyes that shine in the dark, and velvety hands, and something that I call her velvet fury. You would enjoy knowing her."

"You certainly never take anything to heart."

"Why should I? Have we not been enjoined to let each day take care of its own troubles?"

She turned quickly toward him.

"What do you do about the others?"

"What others?"

"All those that are *past*."

"Oh, yes, it is the blessed past that people set such store by, women in particular. They are frightful about going around carrying more than they can bear. But what shall one do with all the troublesome baggage? In the old days if there was a flood one could just heave such things overboard. Even now that could be done."

He looked at her with a peculiar side-glance.

She rose.

"I must go home. I cannot understand what you say."

"I thank you, Madame, for your angelic patience, and am glad to find that you are sensible. Let us not talk together too often or too long. Let us simply be friends."

"Simply?"

"Yes! Don't you know that friends can reach the point where they can't endure the sight of one

another? That is for the very reason that they have stripped one another of all ornament and splendor, leaving bare the sharp corners on which they stumble and hurt themselves."

She went forward a few steps, then turned.

"*You* for a friend? That daring feat no one ought to attempt, who is not free from baggage."

He started toward her, then stopped.

"What is it about you? There is something white around you. Also there is something you have forgotten, the years that you have lived. Do you know what the old priest said the evening you arrived? He glanced up from his pipe and looked you over quite concerned: 'You poor child, what have they done to you?' Then he went on with his smoking. I also looked. Everyone stared at you."

She looked at him for a moment, bewildered, astonished.

Was everything, *all* forgotten? Or had it never been? Was it only she who had once had a horrible dream?

Then she laughed.

"What a strange priest! Don't you think so? Where are you going now?"

"Over to hear great Pan sleep. When all good Christian people have gone to bed it is so pleasant here. If my luck is good I may have an

opportunity to hear the Bergefrue¹ and her maidens 'wandering and singing and dancing.' To be sure some troublesome people maintain that it is only the dripping of the water inside the mountain."

He took a daisy from his button-hole.

"You shall have my white blossom. It is the whitest flower in the field, the first that promised that it would do no harm to Balder."

"No, no!" she said hastily. "Do not give me a white flower, it is not suitable. White is not my color. Good-night."

She nodded and started hurriedly down the slope.

Never had she felt more foolish and awkward. It was the same feeling she so often had when she was with Arvid and her clever children. How easily everybody takes things!

No, she need not be afraid to talk with that man. For was she not indeed an old woman? And he? Perhaps he had never thought a word about the whole affair. For the first time this occurred to her.

It was rather late just to begin to understand life. Now she also would try to take things lightly, just as Arvid and the others did — and this man who had the happy faculty of being able to forget from one day to another.

¹ The bergefrue or hougfrue, a character in Norwegian folklore, the queen of the elves or hillfolk.

CHAPTER VII

IT was a perfect day.

Immediately after breakfast Thora Thammers took her book and her work and went up on Flyen. It was now August. In a few days she would be going home. She did not want to think about it. Anyway she had the long day before her to be alone.

And how the sun did shine. Its rays came down like a stream of gold. She thought she could hear them softly humming in their golden splendor; and all around her was the heath with its faint sounds and delicate colors melting into one.

Was there no wind to-day?

She had gotten into the way of sitting there listening, to see if it were not coming, or if something else would not happen.

Down in the parlor below, she often sat, stupidly paying no attention to what was being said. But up here she was always on the alert, listening for all the soft sounds which were barely audible. Then would come a breath from the lake or a drowsy murmur from the river.

And to-day — at last the wind had come after

all. She heard its deep, billowy breathing. It was there. Its roar was like the song of a powerful, many-stringed instrument. The tones seemed to come from the whole earth ——

A cold little nose touched her ear — for they were good friends, those two.

It was Donna, Samuel Stern's young hound.

The dog stuck her sleek head up into her face and gazed at her. In the soft glance of her eye there was an uncertainty, the vagueness of a force not yet awakened.

With the dog came Samuel Stern of course. She had not spoken to him for several days. It had just happened that way, for she no longer avoided him.

He came over and sat down.

"How are you?" she asked smilingly.

"Heaven dwells in my soul as in the heart of a young girl who is beloved, as Goethe says."

"You are no Goethe lover. One can tell that by your quotations."

"Is this not a magnificent day? Such a day as God creates for his saints, but which the sinners enjoy."

"We poor sinners, are we then to be accused of stealing our sunshine?"

"Yes, you spend altogether too much time here on Flyen. You sit here like a sibyl, listening to the heart-beat of the world and writing your wis-

dom on the leaves, only to scatter it to the winds; and you are in complete ignorance of all our happenings. Why were you not at the farewell celebration yesterday?"

She laughed.

"When I was small if there was going to be company at home I was always so impatient. I remember once I stood in a corner and prayed that the visitors would come. Now I would rather get away from people."

She laughed again. She was in good spirits.

She had a sweet little mellow laugh that seemed to melt away among the flowers.

"Is there anything going on?" she asked.

"A great deal. According to official report the Adjunct has been made a Knight of the Northern Star in the service of the King and the Fatherland — and of humanity, as if that were something entirely different. Also, Her Majesty Fru Thamar Gyllenskjold has gone."

Thora smiled as she sat stroking Donna's delicate head, while Samuel Stern watched the graceful, somewhat nervous hands. He continued:

"She always tells me that it is her husband who has such great influence in city affairs, but I don't believe her. Her husband possesses nothing more than the ordinary man's intelligence. Of what avail is that when opposed to hers? With the greatest ease she rules him, and hence the city

authorities, without any one having the slightest suspicion of it, for she governs from so far back in the depths of the council chamber."

"Is this the lady of your heart of whom you speak?"

"Fru Gyllenskjold is a beautiful woman, to look upon. Her slippers charm the eyes of man. Likewise she is not stupid. But one would never entrust a heart to her keeping."

"They must all fear you. Why do they call you Omar Pasha?"

"Oh, that is Fru Gyllenskjold. She must have found some resemblance. According to tradition God loved him, but would never allow him to attain his desire."

She glanced at him. At times his eyes seemed to withdraw beneath his brows and glow like burning coals.

She moved a little farther away. She plucked some flowers and tied them up with blades of grass.

"Is there any more news? I am sure, you know . . . for I think . . . no, there really is nothing——"

"Fröken Schaum has gone also. She could not work here. There is an author who has not gone at it in the right way. She ought to make away with herself. Let us hope that she will make quick work of it. A woman ought not to be tortured too much. Do you know, that mild little

woman is akin to the terrible pedagogues of the 16th century. These ladies who do not know how to write are altogether too rash."

She laughed.

"How is that?"

He continued:

"It is not the mild little Fröken Schaum alone with whom we are concerned. Since our civilization has not yet advanced far enough, or if you will, so long as our natural understanding is not yet clever enough so but that we involuntarily consider a book better when we think it is written by a man — why, in Heaven's name, do not women call themselves Mons, or Hans, or Nils Peter? One ought to use a little common sense."

"That is just what women do not possess, in your opinion."

"Yes, some of them do. George Sand and George Eliot were clever enough to build up their reputation under a man's name. People were fooled into thinking that George Eliot was an old clergyman, and that saved her. Rosa Bonheur went about in a man's costume at the most critical time in her career. Otherwise she would have been devoured. But this foolish creature here, she will obtain results just in accordance with her methods."

"Let us hope that she will succeed."

She laughed again. She was in such good spir-

its. She was watching some ants that were dragging something off. They really interested her more. It was queer, but she cared so little. It did not affect her in the least to hear about all these women who had been so successful, and about this one who was going to fail. In fact she would prefer not to hear anything more.

"Have any others gone?" she asked, however. "I thought . . . no, it was nothing—" She smilingly shook her head.

"Yes, the Adjunct. One misses his attempts at witticism. And to-morrow two of the most charming of our free-minded young ladies go."

"Oh, then you will have to quiet down if both Fru Gyllenskjold and the young ladies are gone. I thought——"

"Do you always think so much? I mean, are you not accustomed to use that word somewhat at random?"

His tone was light.

"You look so shocked. Out with it!"

"Very well, it is quickly said. I have wondered if those ladies down there were not quite necessary for your happiness? Must you not always have a number to worship you, while you yourself take it easy? You must excuse me. I am always afraid to say anything, for I am sure to say too much. One ought not to do that, but

I think, yes, I do think you are spoiled by the women."

Scared by what she had said, she leaned over and stroked Donna's neck. She heard the scorn in his voice as he laughed.

"You do me too much honor, Madame. So that is what you think! I certainly must be wicked, people are so greatly concerned about my soul's welfare. But what is it they are criticising? Something that is here to-day and gone to-morrow, something far out in the periphery of my being. Man is a most complex mechanism.

"No, one who has a mother like mine does not allow himself to be spoiled by any woman. In fact, I do not invite them in, these ladies — I entertain them in the outer court, but they are never admitted to the temple."

She sat erect.

"I should like to tell you about my mother. Will you listen?"

She nodded.

"She has always understood me. She is my comrade, my best friend. She is Moses who is leading me toward the Promised Land; but she is not like Moses who became tired. She never grows weary, therefore I can never be lost.

"I had to leave home early. She said to me: 'It is unfortunate for you, my boy, that I am

obliged to send you from me; but it is your opportunity to see if you can win through.' It happened as Mother feared. It was difficult for me. But all my sins I took to her — everything that I did amiss, and for which I sorrowed and suffered, with all that I went to Mother.

"She never turned away. She understood my nature. She knew about it all, the evil tendencies which I had inherited, and my own despicable qualities; but she had no fear. She did not let me lie when I was struck down. Such a love, with its silent forgiveness and tender pity, has a power to protect and save. It is the atmosphere of home hovering round one."

He spoke mildly and slowly. He was looking down so she could not see his eyes.

Suddenly he turned toward her.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing — no, I said nothing."

"I am going to confide in you. In fact, there was once a young woman for whom I opened the door of the temple. There was a place for her beside my mother who was waiting inside. I had told Mother that she was coming, and she crossed the court. White butterflies followed her. But when she had set her foot on the threshold she turned and went away again. *She did not understand that she stood on holy ground!*

"Then I said to Mother: 'It is over. The

white butterflies will come here no more.' But she said: 'Now is your opportunity to grow, to rise above yourself.'

"Then again came a time when I thought all was ended. But Mother smiled: 'Nothing is at an end.' She possessed in her soul the gift of understanding. No one understands like a woman who does understand. No one sees so far into the soul of another. Therefore I worship my mother. She is the only woman whom I worship. I have lost faith in other women. I learned that from the one who turned away. I name her as accomplice in all that I have done amiss."

Thora Thammers sprang up from the stone where she was sitting. Her lips grew white and seemed to shrivel. She had felt that something was coming. She had noticed his voice which had altered until she no longer recognized it.

She stared at him.

He stood there transformed —— heavy, strong, with the dark flame in his eye.

Now for the first time she recognized him as he once was. It was as if he had risen before her unchanged through the long vanished years.

She looked at him in dumb terror.

Was it her fault? —— His, his crime — was it hers?

He laughed.

“And you? Are you satisfied with your development? Was it not more than commendable of you to become the mother of those children? I wonder if they are not more like children born out of wedlock?”

Suddenly she grew calm and quiet. Her blood seemed frozen within her and it was a relief.

With bowed head she stood there.

Both were silent. He breathed heavily as if from physical exertion.

“I had to say it,” he said quietly at last. “It had to be said once.”

She looked up.

“Yes . . . yes,” she said hesitatingly.

Then she smiled and raised her head. Her throat swelled. Her blood began to move and a light flashed in her eye.

“It does not matter,” she said, and laughed. “Anyway, you are quite right.”

She turned her face toward him. They looked into one another’s eyes.

“Thora,” he said heavily, “give me permission to pronounce that name once more, that name so silent and reserved, like yourself.”

She smiled bitterly.

“Of what use is it?”

“What are you thinking about?”

“Oh,” she said slowly, “of something I once read in the Coptic Bible: But the Lord said to

his disciples, 'Do you not see that the animal is bleeding, and do you not hear how it shrieks and moans?' Then the disciples said, 'No, Lord! We do not hear it shrieking and moaning.' . . . So with us . . . we do not hear one another."

"Explain yourself," he begged. "Answer me. Say something more."

"I will, sometime — later."

"To-morrow?"

She did not answer, but started off.

He stood there gazing after her. He saw the slender, slightly bent figure outlined against the sky — then it seemed to sink down into Flyen.

He could see her no longer, but he could still hear her last word. Flyen had caught it, all Flyen was full of it. . . . To-morrow? Would she come to-morrow?

But early next morning Fru Thammers left. They said a telegram had come from her husband.

Gradually people grew bored and went away. As if they had all silently agreed that they could no longer endure one another, the daily question was, "Who is going next?" They no longer took any notice of new arrivals. They were too much concerned with those who were leaving.

Among the older people the chief subject of discussion was, whether one ought to go or not —

among the younger, how many of the farewell celebrations had been deserved.

Yet there were a few who in a way found it more enjoyable now at the end of the season than when there were so many there.

Among these was Marit Hennerud, the young hostess of Forest Home. As she had more time then to be with her guests, it was always toward the end of the season that she had her little love affairs. Early in the summer a certain young man had been very unhappy on her account; but she had been too busy then to give him any of her time. Now, however, she was ready for a climb up the mountain, or preferably, for an evening row on the water.

If it so happened that the one on whom she had set her heart had to leave too soon, then she would weep bitterly — as if death itself had come to her. But a few days after she would be filled with laughter at the thought of it.

Sometimes, however, the case seemed more serious. Then she would think that this was real love which had finally come to her, and she would confide in her old aunt. Each time the old lady would caution her to be faithful and constant so that it might come out all right. To the sorrow of her family Marit Hennerud had gotten into the habit of rejecting her suitors. It was not her

fault that love vanished when it came too near. The little summer affairs were what suited her best.

The days go by until the last one comes, and the last guest drives off after the last friendly words, "Come again," with the final cheery call down the hill: "For another summer is coming!"

Then everything is closed and locked up, and Marit goes down once more to the village, where the rejected suitors feel a glow at the heart every time they look at her.

This is the fault of the eyes which gaze upon them all so sweetly and so sentimentally; but as she herself never thinks anything about it, it is just as well not to try to make any change.

II

It was the time of the wild rose.

CHAPTER VIII

SO everyone had gone, each to his own home. And it was winter.

To many the time seemed long. It grew cold, and the days were short.

Over forest and mountain desolation reigned. Everything was closed and locked up as though no one were at home. The trees, wrapped in their white mantles, stood there asleep, unconscious even of themselves. No one spoke, unless it was the wind as it went prowling around in search of prey.

The snow froze hard, and gleamed and shone. It built a magnificent castle, bringing together there gold, and silver, and diamonds. But it was cold in the great hall, white and still, as if the Angel of Death lay dreaming within.

There were many for whom the entire winter was merely a period of waiting until it should go again. At last, however, a message came that summer was on the way.

Everything took on a different aspect. A restlessness came over both man and nature. Out in the woods and in the meadows, up from the earth rose the sap, bubbling like new wine. And the

longing for spring broke through the snow, spreading its blue-golden glow over slope and hill.

When field and meadow lay shining green under the white drifts, then Marit Hennerud began to grow uneasy down in the village.

And when the warm winds and the bright nights came the Forest Home Hotel was all in order, ready to welcome the guests of the previous year.

One by one they came.

Elegant and red-cheeked, with the same bland smile, and yet perhaps a trifle more impressive than the year before, the Adjunct went around taking the census.

Yes, they were there — all except Merchant Stern and his two hounds. The Adjunct did not miss them; but Marit Hennerud and many others were quite concerned. They could get no satisfaction from Fru von Asten. She was more interested in talking about the young engineer who was busy inventing a new instrument of destruction.

There was also a number of new guests, besides some married men who had come up with their wives and were going to stay a few days.

The season promised to be a most delightful one. Everyone was in good humor. They had already begun painting the Falls.

It was one of the first days that it was really

warm enough to sit out-doors. They sat on the great veranda in small groups, talking together.

Fru Thamar Gyllenskjold was talking with her husband and had eyes for no one else. Fru Gyllenskjold's husband was a stately looking man. His tranquil face, with its open expression of force and intelligence, formed a striking contrast to hers, which was likewise tranquil in a way. But there were fine lines which showed how her thoughts were given to subtle change. Something would flash for a moment like the beat of a wing, then vanish almost before one had caught a glimpse of it. And involuntarily the eyes would reveal a consciousness of power which again would quickly disappear in the splendor of her smile.

As she sat there conversing interrogatively with her husband, she was unspeakably fascinating. That was one of her talents, asking people agreeable little questions — quite aimlessly for that matter, because she never paid the slightest attention to the answer. But this was something the Director had never comprehended. He was, in fact, very well pleased that it was always he who must arrange everything, and that she was always satisfied with whatever he did.

A short distance away sat Fru Liss, otherwise Fru Wanda Arescho, with her dignified and dis-

tinguished husband. He also was one of those fortunate men who this year had been able to accompany his little wife, and assure himself that she was comfortably located.

Fru Liss was beaming. Her coloring this year was that of nature. It was becoming to her, entirely so. She sat there chattering and zealously working her small fingers.

Quite near them sat Don Miguel, as carefully groomed as ever, and if possible, with mustachios still more daringly twisted than before.

Secretary Arescho saw no one but his little wife. He was not to be blamed for this, since he was to leave the next day.

There were some who thought he needed to stay in the mountains, as overworked as he looked. Fru Liss admitted it, but it could not be helped; Frederick just *had* to work. For that matter, it never occurred to her to think of Frederick except as hard at work. And he was so accustomed to it; just fancy, she thought it did him no harm. But it was so annoying that he always looked so poorly. Yes, it certainly was annoying for her.

He said nothing, only smiled.

Those who had known him before his marriage thought he was greatly changed.

As an unmarried man he had lived with his mother and aunt. At that time he had not the man's fine reverence for woman which can make

such relations so beautiful. Nevertheless, they loved him, although his egotism and natural indolence had taught him to take things easily, and to receive without taking the trouble to give anything in return. Doubtless, however, they knew that he was fond of them.

Now all this was changed. Now it was he who had to think of others, although he had as yet scarcely begun to realize it, being still in the grasp of that sort of infatuation which, as long as it lasts, blinds and makes a slave of one. At times he became conscious of the importance of all these little attentions which he had never thought of before, and there awakened within him a certain wonder, a faint perception of something he had once neglected, of something he never again would have an opportunity to do.

Just at this moment this feeling had come over him, and his face became so thoughtful that it was not strange that Fru Liss for the moment really forgot that he was there — especially since Don Miguel, in his atrocious tenor voice, had begun to tell some of his malicious stories.

The others around also became more lively.

Fru Sahm had gotten the learned young doctor in a corner. She wanted to know if love existed in the secondary period, and if man could be said to be a variety, or an original species.

In order to tease the Adjunct, a young lady had

offered to deliver a lecture on a theme never before adequately treated: masculine weaknesses.

Other young people had surrounded Student Adelssohn, a dark-haired Norlander with intrepid blue eyes. He had a certain cosmopolitan air. He had been out in the world, had traveled for a couple of years, and had just now come straight from Nice. He interested them, for he was so refreshingly reckless in his speech. In fact, he was worse than Omar Pasha.

He glowed with anger over the fact that France would tolerate, within her borders so to speak, a gambling place like Monte Carlo. The emperor had allowed it to be established, but the republic ought to forbid it. It was a sin against humanity.

The next moment it was the old race of princes that was under consideration, as history shows it to us, impoverished, degenerated beyond God's favor. It seems to be very difficult for any such to become even ordinarily honest people, still more difficult for them than for others to attain the rank of real men.

Some one ventured the witty remark that he must be the only person who was in possession of his full senses.

But he was not through. He continued:

— Down there he had met what to him was a new race of human beings. They had seemed

like the most common sort, worse than the poorest people. They believed that Providence had supplied them with money, just so they might enjoy themselves — which they could not do. But, bless my soul, how they could bore themselves. One could see them going about yawning in the midst of all the magnificence of the world.

The young ladies thought it time to change the subject, so they asked about the costumes that were to be seen on that elegant world promenade.

He laughed. Was there really something else? Yes, he couldn't help noticing some of them — or rather, some that were not, for the ladies now-a-days seemed to be trying to solve the same problem that in olden times Queen Kraaka was obliged to solve, only in the reverse order: how to be clothed and yet naked. It was really wonderful to see how respectable women hastened to take up fashions introduced by and for the demi-monde. He did not think it showed great intelligence, but that perhaps was a quality that had died out. In the old days they burned clever women. Then there was something he had noticed, the particularly awkward way in which they held up their dresses. What has become of the great heritage which they must once have received from the Graces?

The ladies withdrew. Either he was a Bohemian, or an outright socialist, or a superman.

The Adjunct, for the benefit of Dean Hemb, was expounding his theory that a minister's aim should be to make the higher atmosphere accessible to mankind, while at the same time he should be on the alert for the needs of the young. The Dean came over to remonstrate with the young man for his presumptuous words.

The Adjunct laughed, and promising to keep silent, placed himself in the doorway where he stood gazing at Fru Gyllenskjold. As he did this, he showed himself so helplessly in love that for a full fortnight he became one of the most fascinating topics of conversation.

The Dean took the opportunity to get hold of Merchant Iversen. Here was an entirely different sort of fellow. With Iversen he could talk about things that were worth while. So he began with the subject of phosphate fertilizers.

Iversen had been thinking about buying some property where there was a remarkably rich bog, but Nina didn't like ——

"Now if you could just give me your reason for it, Nina Mother."

Fru Iversen sat beside her husband, embroidering roses on a fine net and had no ideas for anything else; but as her husband grew insistent she became somewhat irritated.

"Let me alone, Iversen! Reason, that is one of the worst words in statistics. But heavens, I

do declare if there isn't Madame Harder, in her black dress, of course!"

"Yes," said a lady. "People say that she goes calmly about in mourning for a man who was not her husband. They even know who he was, but it is too unpleasant a subject."

Conversation ceased. It was very seldom that she showed herself among them.

Even Don Miguel was silent, although he had just reached the point of his story. He gave his mustache a twist as he stared at her.

There was something about her — not chic, it was something more — "a born princess," one of the few among princesses and such like, who really corresponded to the idea represented by the word.

His eyes followed her as she came up the steps. No, it was rather what one usually calls regal, the something which seemed to envelope her. It did not escape him either, that she possessed that delicate, maidenly charm which elderly unmarried women most often preserve, and which married women most often lose.

And he, who otherwise always knew what ladies had on, did not notice the simple black gown which had caused such scandal. He merely thought that she looked different each time he saw her — so unlike other good people whom one met and grew tired of.

It was really remarkable, for she was pale and

thin, without any special beauty, and old looking. Nevertheless, there was a beauty about her, about the head as she carried it, and in the bright glance, the saintly fervor. No woman ever before had beguiled Don Miguel into such meditations.

Many of the others felt much the same way, as she smilingly greeted them.

Don Miguel brought out a chair from the parlor.

She thanked him, but remained standing with her hand on the high back.

"I merely wanted to say . . . there is a poor minister's widow with six children, living down in the village. Her house recently burned down and she has lost everything. There was no insurance. Do you not all want to do something for her?"

Some began talking about a subscription list.

"How terribly sad!" interrupted Fru Liss all at once. And tears seemed on the point of starting in her great blue eyes. "But," she added, as she folded her little hands, "widows invariably come out all right. Indeed one often notices how incredibly well things turn out for them; so perhaps it isn't necessary at once — just fancy, I think ——"

She stopped. She suddenly remembered what Fru Gyllenskjold had once said, that if there were no trouble then no one would know that he was

well off. And what would the poets have to write about? All mankind would die of ennui. There really was something in it. And now since it was all ordained . . . the Lord of course had arranged everything as he wanted it.

She looked all tired out with thinking.

Anyway, she didn't like the idea of a subscription list. If they really must do something she would rather have a bazaar. She could get out of that more cheaply. Among her talents economy played an important rôle; for when she bought anything for herself it was always so dear that she was absolutely obliged to save when she was buying for others. And she could get out of this with some little trifle if it only looked dainty.

So Fru Liss voted for the bazaar, although she really had thought she would get away from such things here. Moreover, such people were always so ungrateful.

Adèle Harder had stood looking at her with a faint smile.

Then she said:

"Few people understand the art of giving. One should give carefully so as not to take more than is given, and thus increase the suffering which comes from being poor. For one should give to strengthen and heal. Then few know how to accept, either. They are not sufficiently proud, but

allow themselves to be humiliated. That ought not to be. They should know that if the troubles of life are thus increased, then one is like a soldier at a difficult post. We owe respect to those who hold their own, and to those who succumb. . . . If we can help someone, then it is we who help who should be most thankful. The joy of giving is greater than that of receiving. Therefore the one who gives should be thankful to the one who receives. That is all I wanted to say."

Don Miguel had taken a dish from the sideboard and was going around among the men who were all anxious to contribute.

This annoyed Fru Liss. It would certainly spoil their bazaar.

As he came back Adèle Harder glanced at Don Miguel in a surprised way, half apologetically, as if conscious of having done him an injustice. This gave him a chance to look into her eyes. They were eyes that at some time had wept long, and their color was not so deep as it once was. Yet in a moment of weakness they seemed to him more beautiful than Fru Arescho's.

When she was gone they began to discuss her remarkable doctrines. Also they were somewhat annoyed as they realized that it was necessary for them to do something. The Adjunct's cheeks were even redder than usual. He felt hurt. In his own mind he was quite convinced that he was

immeasurably superior to the ordinary person. Yet at times he felt a slight misgiving that everyone did not realize this. As now, for instance, when this lady had looked at him.

So he began to express his views. But it occurred to him that he might talk himself out of breath, and yet neither he nor the ladies would know how he had happened to discuss evidences of analogy; so he closed his remarks with the amiable concession that spiritually strong women might rise above their sex.

Was it not a well-known author who had said this? He turned toward Student Adelson who stood near — one ought indeed to show him a little consideration.

The young man passed his hand through his hair. He did not know, but he thought that was a set phrase which ought to be discredited, for it was fundamentally false. It was always in his own nature that one attained his best, and one ought to be prepared to overcome all limitations.

It was a satisfaction to contradict the Adjunct.

People began to rise. They felt the need of moving about.

Fru Liss turned eagerly toward Don Miguel.

“Well, I must say! Madame Harder is really just too . . . don't you think so?”

“Sure!”

For the first time Don Miguel looked at Fru Liss with admiration somewhat mixed.

Thora Thammers rose and walked past them.

"And Fru Thammers," he said, smiling, "is she not also entirely too ——?"

Fru Liss looked after her.

"For such an elderly woman she is amazingly slender," she said, and grew suddenly thoughtful.

She was a particular admirer of just such slenderness, and with a sigh she glanced down at her own plump little figure. She had decided that she did not want to become stout. She must take herself in hand. Gymnastics! But heavens! What an immense amount of energy that required!

Nearly everyone had gone out and was walking about on the lawn.

What a wonderful day it had suddenly become, with its brilliant sunshine and radiant colors! Yet these people went around finding fault with it to one another, while they discussed the bazaar.

Also they found fault with the Adjunct.

"Ladies," he said amiably, "what is the cause? Indeed, it is nothing more than the result of nature's laws. If ladies had the necessary scientific knowledge they could easily calculate this. Is it not so, Herr Professor?"

Professor Maurus, with hands behind his back and stomach protruding, passed just at that moment. He smiled condescendingly, but kept si-

lence. For such things should not be mentioned even in jest — when it concerned the ladies.

Their spirits rose. The bazaar got under headway.

Right under Fru Thammers' window some little children were playing:

Thief, oh, thief are you I say,
For you stole my love away!
But I have the hope in mind,
Soon another one to find,
So I think, tralalala, so I think, tralalala!

She sat there absent-mindedly listening to them.

A little farther away they were weaving the vadmél.¹

They had kept on with their weaving the whole forenoon in spite of the rain, and now they had begun again with unabated zeal:

Thus weave we the vadmél, thus move we together,
Let the shuttle go forward.
So move we together, and thus weave the vadmél,
And all move together,
As the shuttle goes forward.

They sang to a mournful little tune, over and over again.

She sat there watching them until she felt as though she were slipping in with the endless warp and woof — into eternity itself, silent and gray.

¹ A coarse woolen cloth.

But from the parlor came the notes of the Rakoczy march, somber, yet sparkingly brilliant, alluringly wild.

It was the Norlander.

CHAPTER IX

FAR above all this noise and confusion lies Flyen, like a miracle in the glow of the fresh young summer.

It is wrapped in splendor from peak to glacier. Deep and fragrant, the forest winds like a garland around its base.

A triumphant joy streams upward from the earth. The sources of life have opened. Mysterious forces have awakened. Up from the depths of the earth they come, straight from Heaven's store-house.

The river announces their coming, there where it lifts its mighty voice as it hastens by. The brooks chatter about it. The lake also knows it as it lies there with its happy billows shining and dancing in the sunlight.

And the forest, full of power, and courage, and majesty, with its fresh, swelling buds and rose-red blossoms, knows it. It understands.

But it is not easy to learn how such bliss comes about.

Ask the sun as he comes and dispels all the dreams that were woven in the darkness of winter. Ask him if he knows why it is that the

cuckoo cannot keep from singing, and why it is so cosy and sweet in the dark green depths, that the wild wood-dove can never settle down.

Ask him, for he gets about everywhere. Out on the waves he is writing in gold. Ask him what it is. He has filled the entire space under the heavens. The lark soars aloft in the dazzling blue. His song melts away into the rays of the sun. No one knows how it happens. It is one of summer's secrets.

Flyen rises, stretching up toward the blue. Everything is new and clear-cut, soft and silky-fine.

Perfume is wafted from the dwarf birch, from the juniper and the heather. And now that all the birds have come, and all the creeping things have ventured forth, there is great press of business.

The air is full of slender young swallows who must learn to take care of themselves. And down below are the young rabbits hopping about, staring with their big innocent eyes; they have never seen this before.

There is a rustle among the hillocks. There is a whisper, a soft, happy buzz.

And the white butterflies, white and blue — they rise and fall, then rise again. They do not know what they want. They cannot bear to settle down anywhere, the air is so soft and fine.

And the flowers, the modest little flowers that belong to Flyen, they are almost all here. Some of them are already scattering their fragrance about, so wild and sweet.

But the bluebells flock together. They laugh and shake their bells in mild but unrestrained joy: "We are holding high carnival here, we are having a festival."

The others hear and come, all the others. There are the yellow St. John's-wort and St. Olaf's honey-white chalice. There are the daisy and the rock-rose, and over there is the orchid which here and there has made itself at home in the rich soil among the hillocks. It looks so strange in the midst of all the others. In its heart there is a memory — a vague recollection of past experiences which it recounts now in its own bewildering speech.

And hare's-foot and cat's-paw trip about with light tread. No one can hear their step. Rose-red and white they dance about. All Flyen belongs to them —

But listen, all of you together. There comes a long-drawn breath. The flowers bow their heads, while the leaves tremble.

The winds have come from both far and near.

This is the little wind that chases the silver-blue shadows over the mountain. He brings a message from the silken grass and from the bright

marigolds. He steals about thanking them all for the good times they have given him.

Then comes a wind from the long ridges where the star-flowers shine. He brings a message and greeting from the wild rose.

And now comes the great wind from far away, where the ocean heaves and tumbles — and farther still, from the broad plains and vast forests beyond the sea. He always comes to Flyen. He settles down and rests upon the heather.

But somewhere among the hillocks there stands a flower which one wonders about — a strange flower that never has been here before. Yet the great wind who has traveled so far and has seen so much, he knows where the flower belongs — where its home is.

“I know you. How did you get here? You belong down under the great sun. Down there you were clothed in burning purple. We can't produce that color here. But how are you? It seems to me you look rather pale.”

The strange flower shakes its magnificent crown, and the most delicate perfume streams forth. It is well content. There is a golden inscription on its leaves. The burning purple — the dream about the great sun — have been transformed into a soul.

But the heather bloom and the daisy and the

star-flower, all drink themselves drunk on the strange perfume.

The wind passes on.

The river hastens after. It carries a message to the sea from the eternal glacier.

The earth undulates, the atmosphere quivers. The light changes, trembles — weaves a cloak from the dim blue haze, plaits a crown of the shining sunbeams.

A tumult of soft sounds arises, from all the wild creatures, the flowers and the leaves. A golden flood of light streams upward and all is blended into one. Flyen is enveloped in song.

CHAPTER X

THIS time Thora Thammers had been so fortunate as to get a room with a view toward Flyen. This she had always to herself.

Likewise she had a little veranda almost entirely to herself. Of the other two rooms which opened upon it, in one was a bed-ridden lady, and in the other the young student Adelson, of whom it was said that he was substituting for Omar Pasha. She saw little of him.

Strange, how time passed! She had already been here a week. This time she had come alone and practically against her will.

Arvid had gone with a friend for a four-week sailing trip, and Gertrude and Birger had gone in different directions. So all had thought that she had better come up here. Anyway it made no difference to her where she was.

It had been a relief not to find Merchant Stern there, although it was all the same anyway.

The ladies had again begun by paying her attention. The Dean's wife had a fresh supply of good advice which surely must help. Then she herself, she thought, had grown more sensible — for instance, she was much older than the year

before, so old that surely there could be only a few more pages to turn in her book of life.

That also was a relief.

She sat one afternoon on her veranda. Fru Thamar Gyllenskjold passed, spoke, then stopped to talk.

— Yes, she was indeed disconsolate to-day, for her husband had just gone.

Thora Thammers thought it incumbent upon her to say some comforting words, but she felt that she was very awkward about it. Fru Gyllenskjold must think her a perfect simpleton.

Fru Gyllenskjold smiled indulgently as she looked at her in a friendly way.

——“ I really believe that you are improving. I always say that one must be sensible and not dwell too much on one subject, nor grieve too long over anything. That is injurious to one's health.”

Thora Thammers thanked her smilingly for the good advice, for of course it was meant for her. Fru Thamar Gyllenskjold was certainly not a simpleton.

She sat there watching her as she wandered down across the meadow.

It was such a pleasure to watch her.

Just then Student Adelson came out.

He had stood in the doorway peeping out, and was anxious to see more. He asked permission to take his place beside her. He was burning

with a desire to go down across the meadow, but did not dare to do so. Of late Fru Thammers had conversed with him occasionally.

She was amused by his frank dismay over conditions in this world, by his passion for Fru Gylenskjold, and by his efforts to inspire respect for his young manhood. In all sincerity he tried to falsify his good nature. He scowled frequently, and altogether managed to look so hardened that once Fru Thammers, in her quiet, jesting way, asked him to smile, and expressed the opinion that some of the gentler qualities, in fact many of them, also belonged to manliness.

For an instant he had looked at her coldly — then came a smile.

Now she could say what she pleased to him. He liked her all the better for it.

Frequently he came and asked if he might bring her some books, or if there was anything else she wanted. Occasionally he brought her flowers. He thought she looked so pale as she sat there alone on her veranda.

Suddenly he turned toward her.

Would she permit him to ask a question? Why was it that she spent so little time with the rest of the people? For there were really so many nice people there, as Fröken Hennerud had said — men and women of intellect; and here just the other day came the Danish baroness, and the Ger-

man general and baron who had married a Norwegian lady, and who presented himself at the dinner table in such great style — could it be a reminiscence of court life — perhaps in the royal antechamber? Was it not strange that so many of these elegant people seemed to think they could get along with so little manners? He thought at times that they had a very polite way of being rude — and such arrogance, just exactly like their servants. . . .

Would she not tell him? And also, why it was that she mingled with them so seldom?

Fru Thammers had a way of sitting and listening while others talked, without answering. Now she smiled at him.

“Indeed, I will. . . . It is often the case that polish is merely an enamel which can be cracked, and not the real thing at all.”

“Yes, that is true. I can certainly hear it when it cracks.”

In his eagerness he moved his chair up closer.

“I can say this to you without your making fun of me. I don't like to be with people who are not refined — and even those who are refined are seldom enough so. It gives me heart-burn if I am with them long. Do you know, I sometimes have the feeling that I am right in the midst of a rabble . . . an elegant rabble. Yes, you may laugh — for what am I?”

“ I do have to smile. But you certainly are a man of perception.”

“ Do you think so? But I have entirely forgotten to tell you about the two baronesses, along with Fru Iversen. At first they treated me with very marked deference because they thought I was the heir to a large estate. Now, from certain information they have received, they think I am merely the son of a country tradesman and have consequently lost all respect for me. I think I'll tell them that King Karl Johan once bought snuff of my father.”

“ Why not Louis XIV, that would sound still better.”

He grew enthusiastic,

“ Do you think that would go? ”

She laughed and shook her head — then took her book and rose. Her happy mood seemed to slip away from her.

He detained her.

“ But you haven't told me why you spend so much time up here alone. It makes you so pale.”

She looked at him gently. “ There comes Fru Gyllenskjold. Go down and open the gate for her. That is what you have been waiting for, isn't it? ”

In the garden a little later, as she was starting out on her afternoon pilgrimage, she met Merchant Stern with one of his hounds.

He greeted her in a friendly way as he might have spoken to Fru Iversen, or as if he had completely forgotten her until he had accidentally met her again. It seemed as if Donna remembered her better.

She wondered over it somewhat, then went back into the house.

She did not go up on Flyen. The next day she stayed in and wrote letters — to Arvid, to her children, to her own family, and to Arvid's sister and old aunt, to whom she had never before thought of writing.

Fröken Hemb came up to borrow a book. She was so disgusted. For Fru von Asten had quarreled with her husband, and had carried on so dreadfully that the maid had not dared to go in with the breakfast.

Fru Thammers merely answered with an incredulous smile.

But she knew that it must be true when she came down and saw Fru von Asten sitting there embroidering with the most resigned air, and solicitously inquiring after Fru Iversen's little children. It was generally acknowledged that she was never so industrious in her work, or so amiable in her manner toward others, as she was just after an outbreak. And her husband received the benefit of it all.

“Samuel, I don't know that you understand

me, but I don't think it is a good thing for you to live down there in those old rooms alone with just the dogs. I am sure Fröken Hennerud could manage it so that you could have the big corner room next to mine. No, I don't think it is good for you. You will only get rheumatism down there, and it would be so much pleasanter . . ."

"It is very good of you, Annie. You always think of everything — although I have no rheumatism. Of course it would be pleasanter and more lively. Yes, we'll think about it."

He smiled and went out.

It was to be foreseen that Merchant Stern would take to the young Student Adelssohn.

And so he did. It looked almost as though he had withdrawn in his favor. He saw to it that Adelssohn had a chance to talk, and protected him so that it was impossible for the Adjunct to punish him, even when he deserved it; or for Professor Maurus to give full expression to his contempt.

In return he was blindly worshiped by Student Adelssohn.

One day he told the young ladies that he considered him head and shoulders above the other people. This made them angry. They thought it was a slight directed at them, and they complained to Fru Gyllenskjöld.

She laughed.

“C'est son tigre de Nubie — il n'est pas mort”; and Student Adelssohn had received his name.

Now that Omar Pasha had come things grew more lively. Fru Gyllenskjold as well as the rest of the ladies became much gayer. There were some who thought that he was even more fascinating than the year previous. He was no longer so impossible — he left that to his young friend.

Then there was something peculiar about his gayety — a mysterious warmth. They knew it was Fru Gyllenskjold. They were greatly excited and began to feel sorry for the Director who had looked so satisfied and secure.

Merchant Stern had been there several days and was quite at home again. He amused himself with the young girls, went walking with Fru Gyllenskjold, and accepted good advice from the Dean's wife.

Thora Thammers met him frequently in the morning at the breakfast table, or on the veranda at afternoon coffee.

There was not the least indication that there had ever been an exchange of passionate words between them. His voice was gay and light, as though he thought of nothing beyond what he was saying, and then only of one thing at a time;

while hers — she herself could feel how heavy it was with the shadows of the past.

Of course this was merely because she was morbid.

Without giving herself any reason for it she did not go up on Flyen during this time.

Then she asked herself what she meant by it. Such precaution was entirely unnecessary. Were they not through with one another anyway? And would not life soon be at an end for them both?

— What did she want? To read his thoughts? To measure the depths of his soul? Was he not just what he ought to be? Did she want to begin it all over again? Or did she want to avenge herself on him? No, she did not — but nevertheless, the last word had not been said. There was a smart back of it all, where the fire of remorse was burning.

She almost laughed one day when she heard him explaining to Fröken Hemb that one had no right to be melancholy. For one thing it was an unbecoming criticism of the Creator, and for another it merely wore one's nerves out.

Fru Iversen came up. She agreed with him entirely. She never took anything to heart except when it was fairly convenient. She called it having presence of mind.

Fru Thammers arose and went out.

How fortunate for Samuel Stern that he had Fru Iversen! How they must enjoy one another!

Later in the day it grew hot. They sat outside on the lawn and drank their afternoon coffee. The ladies sat around the big table while the gentlemen walked about.

They talked about religious matters and about dress, and about a minister who had the faculty of expounding so that even quite ordinary people could comprehend the deepest questions of the soul.

Fru Iversen confessed that she had honestly tried to fix her gaze upon the unseen, but that it was difficult. This human life is, as everyone acknowledges, a most remarkable enigma. As for Fru von Asten, the charming thing about her was, that she was always so easily satisfied about everything that could not be seen.

Fru Liss sat there decked out in every way to deceive the eyes of the men who looked upon her.

The General stood near. He could not keep away from her.

She sat there playing with a meek little kitten, with black paws and pink ears.

“No, Tullemand, you are entirely too charming. How can you say such things, Fröken Hemb, that you believe in man’s natural deprav-

ity! People are really good, I think, at any rate in cultured families."

She looked so pious and so charming as she said this, with the soft shadows of her long eye-lashes falling on her cheeks.

The General was impressed.

—"Good books?" She turned toward Fru Sahm who thought it was very difficult to know what one ought to read. "Heavens! That is not difficult. If the papers don't speak well of a book I don't touch it."

Then she turned again toward the General and assured him that she had no idea of north and south. She had no sense of direction.

The General thought that divine.

Yes, but Student Adelssohn was scandalized, and said that was something that the smallest insect had. He thought she hadn't even the intellect of an insect.

Student Adelssohn just at that moment was holding forth on politics to a group of young people. They heard his loudly expressed hope that France would have enough sense not to start in with the Bourbons again.

The General cast a threatening glance at him, not because of the Bourbons, but because his whole manner was so irritatingly disrespectful. And he assured Fru Arescho that in Germany such people would not be allowed to go around loose.

A little farther away Professor Maurus and the Adjunct were entertaining one another discussing social questions.

Many of the gentlemen had joined the company, and finally Merchant Stern came. In his usual manner he began to contradict, then seemed slightly annoyed, and finally ended by becoming quite jolly.

Neither the Professor nor the Adjunct enjoyed this. The Professor could not bear to be drawn into Merchant Stern's fun-making. He found it agreeable only when it was directed toward others. The Adjunct's smile became weak and uncertain. He glanced helplessly about as if looking for assistance.

In front of them lay Wolf, yawning, yet listening attentively to it all.

Coming from one of the out-buildings was heard Donna's howl.

Fröken Hemb had gone to give her some bread, but when she found the door locked so that she could not get in, in an access of misplaced kindness she had filled the key-hole. And Donna, who had recognized the odor of the fresh coffee cake, had lost all self-control.

Thora Thammers rose, went over and took the bread out, then stood talking with Fröken Hemb.

Now Fru Gyllenskjold rose.

She had sat there on her own bench resting.

She went into the house and then came out again. She glanced casually at the gentlemen who were so busily talking.

Merchant Stern came over to her.

“And they strove against the Philistines and David became tired. Now you shall rest. It pleases me most graciously to command you to take a little walk. Have I not told you to let the Adjunct alone? You are getting into the habit of committing too many crimes.”

He laughed. “But if the crimes have become habits they can no longer be recognized as crimes. It has pleased your eyes to be mistaken, Madame. For that matter you surely heard how gay we were. We were cultivating human joy, even the Professor in his faint-hearted, superior way. . . . And that is what one ought to do. One should never scorn light joys.”

They started down toward the meadow. Merchant Stern turned and whistled.

Wolf got up, stretched himself, walked over to Fru Thammers and wagged his tail. It was a friendly invitation to go along with them, but it was not accepted.

Fru Thammers stood for a moment talking with Fröken Hemb and watching them. She had heard all that was said and she felt a certain pang.

Jealous of Fru Gyllenskjold and the young girls? She was forced to laugh at herself.

She went up to her room, took up a hand mirror and gazed at herself. There was need for it. Yes, there were many tiny wrinkles. And her eyes — how long since they had taken on that strangely distressed expression?

There came to her mind one night . . . it was soon after Birger was born . . . Arvid had awakened as she lay there sobbing. Was it after that night? That was a long time ago. What had he said to her, he, who worshiped human joy — who never allowed any of the light joys to pass him by?

He had once begged her for an answer. Now he had completely forgotten it. He was a sensible man ——

She still stood with the mirror in her hand, looking at the sharp lines about the mouth which seemed to grow deeper as she gazed.

She began taking walks again and she spent more time with the others down below. Occasionally she would take a stroll with Student Adelssohn.

They thought she was becoming more lively and was looking better. The Dean's wife thought it was the hot water.

She no longer took any pains to avoid Samuel Stern. Whenever they met they talked together carelessly and gayly, about anything.

At table she had taken a seat beside Fru Iversen. Near them was Merchant Stern, which Fru Iversen considered great good luck.

So they talked about the food, about the dogs, about the wind, and about the weather. Fru Iversen had never known before that it was so pleasant to talk about wind and weather.

CHAPTER XI

IT was evening. She stood at her window looking out.

The moon came up blood-red over Flyen. She stood there watching the long, sinking shadows. There came over her a longing for the flowers and all the rest up there. She had not been up there for a week.

She went down and found the garden empty. In the big hall they had begun dancing.

But when she came up there — all was so wonderfully still. Apparently not a living thing was near. They had all gone to rest.

Involuntarily she walked softly, for along the path she saw the flowers with bowed heads and folded leaves. She moved as in a darkened land where thousands of little homes were closed and barred.

A strange mood took possession of her.

She sat down, resting her head against a stump, and gazed out toward the white mountain, up toward the heavens where the evening red was dying away.

She thought some one was coming.

As she sat there listening she lost consciousness.

— Yes, it was Night. Upon her brow was the glow of the eternal snows. The heavens lowered and she stepped down, while the earth was filled with her wonderful, glorious light. . . . There it came from the mountain ridge, in long, whispering billows —

High above her head, far, far away, she heard the sound of another world, a world she once had longed for, but never had been able to attain. The air was full of a strange splendor, a silent, dreamy splendor — and there, far away, was the golden land of her childhood. She wanted to ask the way thither. She would ask the great mountains that looked out over the earth and up into the heavens — she would ask them the way to the land which belonged to her. She would climb the mighty steps of the heights and see whither they led. . . .

Again some one came with silent step. It was the great Hougfrue who ruled over Flyen. She recognized her, for Sjur had told her about her. In her hand she carried a green twig. It was a magic wand, and everyone who looked upon it came into her power.

A shiver passed through her as she came under the spell.

The Hougfrue came straight toward her, and as she stood directly in front of her Thora felt impelled to bow low.

"You see, I belong to you; you must help me," she said softly.

"What do you wish?"

Her heart burned within her.

"I have a great longing."

The Hougfrue looked at her with eyes that were dark and full of power.

"What is it you long for?"

She stretched her arms out toward her.

"For that which I cannot have — for that which belongs to eternity."

The Hougfrue touched her with her wand and her eyes were mild.

"But you must arouse yourself and act — otherwise your wish will not be granted," she said, and passed on.

She watched her as she moved across the moor, gliding silently over the long billows of heather bloom. Wherever her foot had trod lay colors she never had seen before, and there where she disappeared from sight the low hillock was enveloped in flame —

Now some one else was talking to her, this time a human being.

She had not noticed when he came. She saw that he sat by her side, but she was not surprised. Nothing surprised her as she sat there, powerless to free herself from the dreamy spell which had been cast upon her.

"What are you doing?" he asked, in a voice so mild and full of warmth that it seemed to creep right into her heart.

She knew it was Samuel Stern. She saw the handsome mouth with the gentle expression which had belonged to it long ago, in the days of his youth.

She was not surprised to see him, nor was she surprised by the fact that he sat there talking to her. She continued to stare straight before her.

"What are you doing?" he asked again.

"I am listening to the winds," she said quietly. He moved forward slightly.

"What do they say?"

"Ah, they come so heavily laden!"

"You are mistaken," he said. His voice grew soft and trembled.

"No!" she said, "there is the ocean wind that knows everything. Then there is the little wind from the valley which steals what has been sighed forth to the wakeful night and bears it hither."

He bent toward her.

"I knew you would come here again," he said.

But somewhat to his surprise he saw that she had not heard him at all.

—"Then there is the Bergefrue . . . she has been here." She said this as in a dream, and nodded slowly as she spoke.

“And she has touched you with her wand! Yes, this is indeed her realm.”

His voice sounded as though he were glad about something. Her mood took hold of him. Suddenly it seemed to him that they were back again in the days of their youth, when they roamed about together and he was imprisoned by her fancies. Here indeed was sacred ground where they could meet . . . far removed from life.

“I see,” he repeated and laughed. “The Bergefrue’s wand has come near you.”

“But everything is changed here,” he added. “Everything is different.”

She glanced up and shook her head.

“Yes, here people live what is in their thoughts and in their dreams, that which forms an undercurrent of song throughout the whole of life. Here they have to be honest with one another.”

She looked at him in silent wonderment, only half hearing what he said.

“Do you see, down there all is closed and dark; but here in the home of the fairies, all is opened up for us. Here the air is warm, and there is shelter from the nor’wester. Here we can wander about again in the old paths. We can tell one another a little of everything — obtain a respite by telling stories as she did, the death-doomed, for her Sultan.

“What are you thinking about? Do you know

anything that is good to think upon when the nights are long? Why did you come here again?"

A tremor passed over her face. Her eyes grew big and tired.

"I wanted to find something," she said slowly. "What was it? I do not know. No — I do not know whether I know — I thought, perhaps, it was here — for it was nowhere else."

She gazed into space.

"Now I know! I wanted to rest."

"You shall tell me something else, about the happiness you have found."

She shrank back timidly. An uneasy expression came over her face.

"Happiness? I do not know what that is. I have forgotten what I thought it was."

She covered her face with her hands.

"What do you want? You disturb me," she said softly.

"That time you dreamed your sun-dream . . . what was it like?"

She turned toward him and laughed.

"One must not dream — it is too costly. It takes away what one has and then all is gone."

"What have you experienced of life's beauty?"

"Life's beauty?" she whispered. "Yes! There was gloom before it came — and horror when it went. So I have forgotten that also."

There was silence.

He watched her as she sat there seemingly having forgotten that he was there. How could she look so childish? How did it happen that she held her head in such a way? He could think of nothing but a flower.

"Tell me another story," he said gently. "Remember, it is not the same here as it is down below. Here the door that leads out is closed, and the one that opens into hidden thoughts and dreams is opened. Bright, white-winged, they fly about you, all those fancies that came to you when it was spring. Here Time does not exist, therefore nothing can come to an end."

Again she grew restless. She rose, but sat down again. The expression on his face seemed to compel her to remain.

"You know," he continued, "if people are touched by the green wand their eyes are opened. They can see one another. Tell me, what do you see?"

She sat for a little while as if she were considering.

"Yes, I have to laugh, for there is one who is so happy that he cannot see when tears and blood are dripping. That is because he has never taken anything to heart."

"You are telling it wrong."

“No, that is correct. I am not a man, so I cannot forget —”

“But you have indeed forgotten the old song,

Then am I most joyous
When most I am oppressed!

“You do not know that there is a man who has fought far into the heat of the day countless numbers of times; who has said to himself, ‘This that I do to-day, this that I think, I shall never do again — this is indeed the last time.’ Yet he has done it over and over again. The last time never comes. That makes him heavy at heart. . . . Now you must tell me something you know. Where have you been all this long time?”

“I? I have gone about searching . . . There was something I had lost. I could not find peace. At night . . . I could not lie in my bed. I would go out where it was dark — ‘There must be some one who can help me,’ I thought; but no one could. ‘Let me go,’ I begged — ‘I pray you, let me go! I want to go in there where all is deserted . . . I want to go in to the withered leaves, to all that which once was green, but is so, no longer —’

“Then I came out into the great desert, and Night came to me. She closed her heavy eyes . . . and I prayed that no one might disturb me — Then some one said: ‘Why are you

grieving? Because some leaves have withered, a song has died away, and lights have burned out? Such indeed is life! —— But I went on. I had no peace. Then one came in the gloom and said to me: ‘What are you looking for? It would be better for you to go with me, then perhaps you will find something to help you.’ It was Sorrow who took me by the hand and led me into her realm so full of abysses, leading ever farther, farther down ——

“And I went down . . . That is why I came here last year . . . because I had been there. . . . I needed to rest.”

He wanted to say something, but she stopped him.

She pressed her hands to her brow.

“For I was so tired. I found nothing to help me. My eyes could see nothing.” She shook her head. “And now I want nothing more.”

She had spoken heavily, indistinctly, as if the words had pressed forth against her will.

She rose.

“I must go,” she whispered almost inaudibly.

“No!” He made her sit down again. “Now it is I who must tell a story, one that is true.

“It was one evening here on Flyen. A man came up and paid his respects to all around, greeting them and expressing his thanks for the pleas-

ure they had given him. They returned his greeting and told him that she was there. He knew that she would come. The man wandered about in the beautiful, lonesome night. He listened to the birds and to the flowers that were sleeping. He thought they must all be dreaming of her ——

“That man was one who had gone far astray. He dared not stand in her presence, for fear she would avenge herself. She might come upon him when he was weak and tired and might terrify him.

“He also had traveled the dark road. Many are the paths that lead into the land of Sorrow. He likewise had suffered. There was some one he had lost. He had inquired along the way: ‘What has become of you.’ But no one ever answered.”

She sat motionless, with bowed head and hands folded on her knee. Then she rose slowly.

“You must let me go. I can listen no longer. It is all so strange, everything.”

He also rose.

“I know another story that is more amusing. I will tell it to-morrow evening. Remember that you are to come again for the sake of my story, and anyway you will have to come since you are under the influence of the Hougfrue.”

She did not answer. Neither of them spoke

again. He followed her down to the door where he bade her good-night.

When she had reached her room she remained standing for a moment quietly.

Then she went over, and opening the window looked out.

She must rouse herself. She must bring herself down to realities.

The fog had risen from the valley and wrapped itself about the mountains, hiding Flyen. Soft and white it crept in among the houses. Everything big was hidden; but all the little things, the houses, the gate, the trees, all these had increased most wonderfully in size and seemed to grow right out of the all-pervading white mist.

Everything real seemed to have been changed into a something without a name, into a dream which had taken possession of the innermost recesses of her brain. She could not comprehend it.

“Why do I need to trouble myself about it?” she said finally, when at last she had lain down. “He is indeed a strange being.”

The next day Fru Thora Thammers had such dark rings under her eyes that the Dean's wife called her to account, in particular with regard to the hot water.

The Dean's wife was somewhat like Fru von

Asten in the tyrannically officious way in which she looked after those whom she liked best.

She was fortunate also in getting Fru Thammers to see what was good for her, and also to understand that it was her moral duty to stay at the house that evening. After the bazaar they were going to dance.

When evening came she was there. She sat looking on. Dance music always made her melancholy, as also did watching the dancing. The tears came to her eyes. This was ludicrous, of course.

Samuel Stern was dancing with Fru Iversen and seemed to be enjoying himself. Afterward he came over to her.

"What are you pondering over? You ought to be dancing. It would do you good."

She smiled faintly.

"It is lively here, but I do not see why it is so necessary to laugh and make such a noise. They are certainly not all so utterly happy."

She was not thinking of the others, but of him as she spoke.

He laughed.

"Oh, yes, that is true, but then we are under no obligation to feel this joy for any length of time. I would not even vouch for five minutes. You shake your head rather scornfully it seems to me. You think it is pretence. You are mis-

taken, for we really are in good spirits. It is a sort of decoration to one's life. It does not go very far, but then one has no other expedient. Human beings are indeed poor in one sense or the other. So one must be sensible and get along with what one has. See Student Adelson who has received permission to dance with Fru Gyl-lenskjold. He is overjoyed. And among the others who are going the rounds there are certainly some who are fully as happy as he, if not more so. Heavens! How far one can go at times!"

She laughed. That quiet, restrained voice with its low, sweet tones, was well suited to laughter.

"Yes, you are right," she said. "That is quite convincing."

"There, Don Miguel is playing his insufferable waltz. You won't dance, I know. I have promised Fru Iversen to show her some pictures I have at the cottage. Will you go with us?"

Fru Iversen came up just at that moment, and together they went over to the cottage to see the pictures.

One was a Madonna by Crivelli, a fragile, slightly bent figure with pale, sorrowful face. Yet there was a secret charm about her, a sweetness in the glance half cast down.

"Goodness, she is certainly not handsome!"

broke out Fru Iversen. "Pardon me, but it seems to me she looks like Fru Thammers!"

"Yes, I think so, too. And here, this is St. Francis. According to tradition he is on a visit to a cloister where they cultivate thorns in order to do penance with them. He changes them into roses."

"I could love him for that. To be comfortable ought to be one's chief aim in life I think. And Heaven knows it is a blessing that they can find something to paint besides these everlasting Madonnas. Pictures of men are always decorative."

Merchant Stern went over to Fru Thammers who still stood in front of the Madonna.

"You look as though you were thinking that you would not come. Remember, a spell has been cast upon you."

"I would like to hear the story," she said quietly. "It may amuse me. It is my chief aim also, to have everything as pleasant as possible."

But the story was not told that evening. It was not ready—nor was it the next evening. There was always some excuse for putting it off.

A fortnight passed. Thora Thammers had not yet had an opportunity to say what she wanted

to him, and then to tell him that now this chapter must be closed. That was what she had intended to say the next evening, but she had not done so.

For that matter, why should she not?

Indeed, it amused her to watch him, as he was down below in the daytime, and then up there in the evening. Down below, how careful he was that no one should suspect he had any feeling. Everything was made light of, or turned into a jest.

And now — just when it looked as though they might consider themselves as ordinarily good friends — his sudden, inexplicable change, his holding back as if he had bethought himself, and was careful on her account. It occurred to her that he was afraid that she would take his words too literally, and think that he might fall in love with her again.

He certainly did not know how experienced she had become, nor how much she knew of the world. Nor did he know that she could not believe a single word of his, not even in her innermost heart. It was a pity he did not know how safe he was, that he need take no precautions on her account.

But nevertheless, although she would not acknowledge it even to herself, she suffered when she saw him devoting himself to two young girls, who were boldly making love to him. She could

not express to herself how his light, irresponsible manner irritated her.

But then up there — she forgot it all again . . . and all the time that had passed . . . and everything that had happened. And it seemed to her that there were only they two, and that all was as it once was, and that she could sit there forever and let life quietly burn itself out.

It must have been the fault of the evening; for, as the sun sank and all grew solemn and still, blood-red rays streamed across the slope, leaving lurid stains on the heather.

It was the summer night which lured forth the bright spirit of youth. Mystic characters were spread out before them. The Bergefrue had touched them with her wand.

As the days went by they seemed to live a sort of enchanted life up there on the heights, side by side with the everyday prose. Down below by day he was Omar Pasha, taken up with a thousand different things — up there in the evening, on the borders of the Promised Land, his countenance was changed. He resembled the one she once had dreamed about. Ah, why had he not at that time spoken these same deep words which now so strangely moved her soul!

How he could sit and talk about all the little things on Flyen, and at the same time about those

of the past — with something in the background which gave color to the whole!

There were moments that came to her as something beautiful she once had experienced in a dream. She felt sorry for everyone who was in trouble and could not come up here to rest.

She wondered over her previous fear of him — and her caution.

Yet when he said, "Come up this evening at sunset, I have something to tell you," she thought each time that she would not go. But she could not help herself. She was in the current of a stream which was carrying her gently on.

Then there was so little to the day. She went about so tired. It seemed to her that her senses were not all awake. Up there it was better. She forgot — that was good for her. And besides, it would soon all be over anyway.

A reckless feeling took possession of her. Life, the reality of happiness, she had never known. Therefore she could not grudge herself these ghostly fancies which faded away when the sun rose. That which was not, was nevertheless the best thing she had.

They had a certain power to entertain one another, that was all it amounted to. They were two old people playing at fairy stories, some very harmless fairy stories that had grown out of life's

pain . . . pale little blossoms that took on color only when touched by the last rays of the sun.

Oh yes, they were indeed subjects for mirth, he as well as she. She was certain that in secret he was amused over her, and she again for her part, over him.

Anyway, that was what one was here for.

CHAPTER XII

ONE day the entire party decided to make an excursion to a dairy up in the forest, where they were to eat cream porridge and look at an old cheese press.

Fru Thammers had promised the Dean's wife that she would go along, and afterward when Merchant Stern asked her she told him also that she would go. Then she repented. All at once it seemed impossible for her to go.

They were just getting ready to start. Marit Hennerud had gone up before, so as to be ready to receive them.

Thora Thammers met Fru Iversen in the garden. "Tell them that I have gone on ahead," she said.

But down under the slope she turned aside, and found a place where she could see the road without herself being seen. From this point, with secret pleasure she watched them all go off together.

Yes, it was all right. There were Samuel Stern and Fru Thamar Gyllenskjold. It looked as though he were in high spirits. He certainly seemed very much at ease with Fru Gyllenskjold. She was quite pleased over her little trick. He

probably had not once noticed that she was not there.

The thought, however, that she never again could trust herself, came to her with a strange pang. For those evenings up there . . . those soap-bubbles which they had blown for one another's amusement, which had amused her because she had nothing else . . . perhaps he was even now amusing himself as well as Fru Gyllenskjold over the fact that she had been so taken up with the affair. Her distrust of him became so strong that it suddenly stripped the glamour off from everything.

Now this also was ended!

She asked herself sarcastically: where indeed did she find herself now? She certainly had known there was nothing in the whole affair. Why had life become interesting to her again? Should she never be done with all this?

She rested her head on her hands.

Those evenings had been to her like a resurrection — like a fountain of youth bubbling up from the depths of the earth — a golden dusk, filled with the fancies of the heart, with words that had been remembered, words that had been forgotten. . . . Cautiously and shyly they had come, borne on the wind which glided softly about them. . . . And then had come mute words, words that were not spoken, but were there.

She clung to the thought that they were not spoken; but what difference did that make so long as they were there?

She grew helpless at the thought of it.

Yes! She was tired of herself. Such a heart as hers ought to save itself every distress, every burning sorrow — for it was always the same, always so painfully alive, always so greedy and desirous of life.

What was this she had heard about the “peace of old age”? Where was it? It was well for her that she had determined that this should end.

She sat with her chin resting in her hand, smiling quietly.

She could not get away from the thought of those evenings up there. It seemed as if all the silent spirits of Flyen had played on their heart-strings, and amid all the discord had found their way into the harmony of their souls. From all this had arisen new, deep tones. A flower had sprung up in the bright night. A rare blossom — a nameless bud — had put forth amid those magical surroundings.

Ah, but she had to laugh! By day everything was closed and ended. They were merely two old people going about with no concern for one another.

She rose and went on, up over the slope.

To-day she was sure of being alone. To-morrow perhaps she would meet them on Flyen, Fru Gyllenskjold and Omar Pasha.

It began to rain. She sat down under a fir tree and listened to the soft patter of the rain with a feeling of pleasure. The warm odor of the ripened grass was wafted toward her . . . and the cool fragrance of berries. And the moor — so far as sight could reach it lay like a dark blue sea.

It grew lighter. The air was solemn and full of music. She seemed to hear, coming from the innermost depths below, a soft but mighty sound, rising, falling, like the drawing of deep breath. It must be the earth.

And from beyond came the deep voice of the river . . . to be sure it was always there, but now it seemed to force itself upon her. . . . And all around was something ceaselessly whispering.

The water rocked noiselessly below. It rose and fell, rose and fell again. The heavy billows seemed to throw themselves straight up, rolling in everywhere. She must go, for certainly more rain was coming. But she did not stir. She sat there watching the waves as they slipped along, heavily, noiselessly. It reminded her of a story she once had heard when a child.

There was a sailor who was returning home after having been away for a long time. He hur-

ried on toward the country parish, the home of his youth. He could not sleep at night for joy. He thought of a little cabin where flowers grew about the door . . . and of Mother within, and of Dordi, his heart's dearest.

So on he went day and night, asking everyone he met if they knew his home district. And if any one did happen to know it, he would fairly beam. How was it now in the land of his youth? Did the sun shine in at his mother's window as it used to? Was the moss growing on the door-step? And the little blossoms around, were they as fresh and blue as ever? Did they come up every year as they used to in the old days? And the folks up there, were they just like they used to be, brave and strong, with the same steadfast mind, and with hearts that were big and warm, like Dordi's and Mother's?

No one could answer all these questions. He had to hurry on to see for himself. He had walked for days and nights. His feet were swollen, but he did not notice it. He could not stop for joy. Before daylight he reached a little cliff right above his mother's cabin ——

The sun came up — but it did not shine on the window panes. He could not see his mother's cabin.

Then suddenly he grew very tired. He had to sit down. And it was a long time before he was

sufficiently rested to go down below into the valley. But when he got there he could not find his mother's cabin. It was not there. There was no moss on the steps and no flowers about.

An old man came and took him by the hand.

"I saw it was you. It is queer that you should come back here."

"Where is my mother's house?"

"You can see for yourself. It is burned down."

"Where is Mother?"

"Oh, she is resting!" He pointed in the distance where the church spire was shining. "She is better off there under the old birch tree."

"And Dordi?"

"It was some time after you left that she went off with a strange fellow. Do you see?"

He laughed.

"And you say that to my face! Thanks! That is queer — but tell me, where is the moss that grew on the doorstep? And where are the flowers with the deep blue cups — I must know that first . . . those that came up every year about the door?"

No one answered him. The old man had gone on.

He had to sit down on a big stone beside the doorway. He smoothed it all round with his hands.

“So you are still here. You know me again, don't you?”

The sun went down while he sat there. And when it came up again he sat there.

“You must let me sit here. I am tired.”

And evening came and he saw the sun set.

“Do you intend to start out again? I ought to go also. I ought to go over to the old birch tree and greet Mother, but I am not good for anything.”——

She could remember what a fearful impression the story had made on her. She had been put to bed with a fever. The whole night she saw the sailor sitting there on the stone. She had wept and prayed that some one would take him in.

She began to think over all that human beings must suffer. It seemed to her she could endure it no longer. Without knowing it she began to weep.

She thought everything around was complaining. She heard all the voices clamoring together, one indistinguishable from the other.

She must ask them about it: “Little flower, why are you so sad? Why do you complain? I see from your leaves that you are all of a tremble. Why are you so cold and white? Is it the big wind that travels through the heavens? Has he told you of the sorrow that fills the universe, even up to the highest clouds?”

“ But it may not be so bad as you think. I will ask the forest: Why do you stand there listening so gloomily? ”

Ah, she knows well enough. . . . It hears the groans down below, deep down whence it fetches its strength. It is the earth which has drunk too much blood. Man has no reverence for her, but she will avenge herself.

She grew afraid.

“ How strange it is on Flyen to-day! Is some one dying? I want to get away from here. I long for the sea.”

And she felt that she must tell them.

——“ My friends, I know that I am ungracious. But you must forgive me, for I have suffered. I am in such great distress. I am surrounded by a gloom which never seems to lighten ——

“ But far out yonder is the sea. It has great, heaving billows that will quench the burning fire — You must forgive me — but I long for the sea.”

She blushed as she said it. She blushed for Flyen’s sake. He lifted his voice and spoke reprovingly:

——“ Did I not take you in my arms when you came? Did I not watch over you while you rested? My broad billows of living trees, my ocean of blossom and leaf, did they not take you to themselves? Have you not learned to inter-

pret their words so full of meaning? And when the Evening-red harnesses her steeds to her golden chariot, and the doors of heaven open, do you not catch a glimpse of the shining, eternal way? Of what moment is the fate of an insignificant human being that you should always have that in mind?"

"Forgive me, great Flyen. You silent forest and all you little flowers hereabouts — I belong to you, I am listening. I will hide myself in the heather — I have forgotten the sea."

Toward evening as the sun went down it cleared off.

She still sat there thinking of many things.

She must go home to Arvid, who still belonged to her. He was her husband. It was true he was not at home.

Then she would go home to her two children; for she had two children. They ought to know that they had a mother. It was true they were not there either.

Wolf came and licked her hand. She drew herself together suddenly.

"Why are you here? I thought you were up at the dairy."

She saw Samuel Stern coming in the distance. As he came nearer a bitterness against the man arose within her. It was with difficulty she kept from shrieking aloud.

Wolf surmised nothing. After two weeks of peaceful intercourse he thought all was amicable. So he sat quietly down as was his custom, with his head on her knee.

But long before Samuel Stern reached them, he saw that he was not welcome. With concern he noticed the far-away expression and the wearied air. For she had been sitting there the entire afternoon. When he came up he took his cue from Wolf and acted as though there were nothing amiss.

"Yes, I stole away just as you did. You set me a good example."

She said nothing. The flowers in her hand dropped down over Wolf.

"Why are you sitting here in such dejection? Is it your thoughts that weigh you down?"

She sighed and half turned her head.

"I never think."

"There you are right. One can easily accustom one's self to that. But why did you not go with us? We had a very pleasant time. The Professor talked about realities, the Adjunct about the higher transcendental sight, and Fru Sahn, one of the latest fruits of woman's admission to higher education, discussed whether man should be looked upon as a variety, or the beginning of a species. . . . You ought to have been there."

She looked at him shrinkingly.

“ It seems to me you are rather frivolous.”

“ Dear me, that is a bad habit of mine. Do you think I ought to break myself of it? ”

An uneasiness came over her. She wished she had gone before he came.

He sat there watching her restless movements. He wanted to take one of her hands and hold it still. “ You seem uneasy. Where is your body-guard — the white butterflies, I mean? ”

She did not answer.

He had come merely because he wanted to hear her voice again — to see if it would take on the same expression that it had the last time, just as she left.

As they had sat there during those evenings, her voice had produced an overpowering effect upon him. It had come to him through the dusk, with its peculiarly closed sound, like something mysterious from another world. She had given it an expression that he did not recognize — soft and restful like the note of a silken string rising from dreamy depths. It had set him all a quiver.

He moved a little nearer.

“ Say something. Talk a little.”

She bent down, plucked a flower, and murmured something in a low voice.

He could not hear. He leaned forward.

“ You are unhappy. What is it? Is it the wind again? ”

He rose and sat down beside her.

"What is it?" he asked again. "Is it a different arrangement of molecules that you want? Is it not cold and damp here? Are you comfortable?"

She smiled dully. "I am wonderfully fortunate. Everyone knows that."

"I am not coming here any more," she said suddenly, in a harsh voice. "It is not at all amusing."

"I pity Arvid!" she continued.

"Certainly Arvid is to be pitied. They are always to be pitied, these poor men who have wives they don't understand. Whose fault is it?"

She grew embarrassed and repented what she had said. It was something entirely different she had intended to say to him, but now she could not remember a word of it.

He leaned toward her.

"The whole earth rests in peace. There is mercy here also for the unrighteous. Let us take things calmly. Is it not good to be up here? I never waste a good opportunity — it is never sure of returning — in fact it never comes again."

He looked at her with concern.

"I think one should fortify oneself against all melancholy — against the hour of great loss. Otherwise one may enter into the land, against his

will, whence it is difficult to find his way out again.

“ I once knew a man. He was not of the heroic type. He was created for big things but was forced to live in narrow surroundings. The little town and his work tortured him. Then one summer-time he came up here. He had to get away from people. Up here he was happy. He could laugh and make merry. Here he could use the big measuring stick, he said. So he went about among the white summits always alone. One day, just before he was to go back to school, he went too far in — and never came back again.”

She turned toward him quickly and passionately.

“ I pity human beings, both those who remain where they are placed, and those who go too far in . . . those who do wrong and those who are wronged! It is hard to live! ”

“ It certainly is not always so exquisitely delightful. But there are people whose lives are full of suffering and who nevertheless are happy. That is because they know how to live —— ”

Again he leaned forward and gazed at her with eyes that had drawn far in beneath the heavy brows.

“ You asked me once how I had become what I am —— I ask you, how did you become what you are? ”

——“ I must tell you something. I have discovered that there is a kind of woman — yes, there are certain women, who, if happiness comes to them, do not have the courage to accept it. They have, in fact, fancied it would be different. There is a watchful something within which says no, something coldly distrustful which doubts everything. And happiness goes away — perhaps to return again — and then disappear as before. But some time will be the last.”

“ Was that a story? ”

“ No, an experience from life.”

She turned toward him with suppressed irritation, while a glimmer of scorn came into her eye.

“ I know another kind of woman. I once knew a young girl. There was one who said to her: ‘ You are like a flower, the most delicate on earth — one that is not rooted to the spot like other flowers, but is on its flight toward heaven.’

“ The young girl laughed and said: ‘ Yes, I am the white Iris. I stand and dream my white dream, and when the sun goes down I shall lift my wings and fly toward heaven.’

“ Then he said to her again: ‘ You are more than the white Iris. You are my sacred flower, you are the Lotus.’

“ ‘ I know it,’ she said, and laughed. ‘ I am fair and delicate. I am the Lotus.’

“ Then Time came marching by and wanted to

take her with him. 'But I don't believe that is suitable for me,' she said. 'You know I am young and slight, and I am waiting for my friend.' 'You must follow me,' said Time, 'wherever I lead.' . . .

"Then she laughed again and said: 'That is not my road. I have a friend — and along our path the wild roses grow.'

"Then it was Time who laughed, for the friend of her heart was not there. And Time took her by the hand along the dark way. Stains appeared on the white wings which did not bear her up."

She looked at him with a pitiful smile.

He sat with his face in his hands. Then he looked up. Her face had grown strangely pale and shining.

They sat there in silence for a time.

Again he looked at her.

"I also knew a young girl once. . . .

'Her voice was sweet and low.'

"I shall call her Sanpriel. I do not know the name, but as a schoolboy I read somewhere that the most beautiful woman was called Sanpriel, and I believed for a long time that it was true. Do you understand?"

"Of course."

She just would not listen to him.

"She also had a friend. And there was an

old parsonage garden where lime trees stood. They went there one bright summer afternoon. The long branches of the trees touched the ground, but they could see the meadows through them.

“Sanpriel stood looking out with head bent, as if listening. Her eyes looked as though she had forgotten that he was there, he who was her heart’s friend.

“‘What do you see?’ he asked.

“‘Only the white mist. It is hiding the flowers from us.’

“‘That only makes their fragrance all the sweeter.’

“They walked on. Her eyes grew big and dark as though her soul lay dreaming within.

“‘Sanpriel, what is it?’

“‘It is only the moon that is coming up out of the forest.’

“Her friend walked by her side. He was so full of longing he wished that he might hinder the flight of time. He thought: ‘She does not love me enough.’ He wanted to kneel at her feet. He wanted to take her hands in his and kiss them a thousand times. But there was something about her that held him back. He did not dare. He only looked at her as she walked along with head bent, as if listening.

“‘Sanpriel, what do you hear?’

“‘It is the wind passing over the tender grass.

And out there is the little bluebell ringing its Ave Maria.'

" 'Sanpriel, I am freezing right here in your presence! Let me feel the warmth of your sun upon me!'

" But she did not answer. She walked along as she listened. Then tears came into his eyes.

" 'Sanpriel, why do you ponder over so many things? You do not love me. You are flying on the wings of fancy far out into space. You are never near me.'

" Then she turned toward him and whispered: 'But it is you of whom I am thinking.'

" 'Yes, but you are not here with me.'

" 'But I am coming. Do you not see that I am coming?'

" 'No, I do not see — you are not coming, you are going.'

" Then she turned toward him with a smile: 'You must wait — only be patient.'

" But the young man could not be patient. Nature was surging within him. He was bewildered by life, and came upon evil things while he waited. Then it was that she should have come, but she did not. She stood afar off."

Thora sat leaning against a stone as though overcome by weariness. She had closed her eyes, but through the lids she felt his burning gaze.

She certainly could endure no longer his sitting

there staring at her. She must quiet her heart. She would pay no further heed to anything he might say. She would go.

She straightened up and glanced hastily at him. There was an expression about his mouth that she had known in the past, an expression of uncontrolled, passionate will.

She tried to rise and go, but she could not. His gaze held her.

“I do not like such stories,” she said weakly.

“No, that is an old story. Here is one that is newer.

“It was many years after. Sanpriel had grown pale. Her eyes were more silent than ever. Behind them lay a soul, still dreaming. It had never been awakened.

“There was some one who had seen her — long, long before. When he saw her thus again his heart trembled within him. He wished that he might lay himself at her feet. But she did not see him. She did not know him, for she had never done more than converse with him at a distance. She did not notice that his heart trembled within him. She had withdrawn into her own chamber.

“So he went out across the meadows. The flowers were having a gay time celebrating the arrival of the white clover.

“Then he said to them: ‘Steal in and lay

your little hands on her sorrow. There where the wound is deepest, creep in and cover it with your rosy fingers.'

"For the white clover is the most cunning flower on earth. So long as it blossoms sorrow is not so dark. And they lured her out again into the bright day.

"Then he said humbly: 'I sent them to you with a message. What did they say to you?'

"Then she laughed and said: 'I must have dreamed once on a time that there was something that had burned into my soul. Also I thought: "The deepest of waters cannot cool me, nor can any remedy be found for this grief of the soul." But now they all tell me together that it is not true. There is a remedy for everything.'

"Then he fell down before her.

"'Do you not know me? It is not you, but I who have passed through the great fire. Deep waters cannot cool me, you alone can do that'——

"Now you may finish the story. Why, why did you go away that time? Do you understand now, how unjust you were, going without allowing me to say a word? Do you understand how you sinned when you went? ——

"Sanpriel, you tremble and are white. Tell me that now you know that I loved you. You stand there with the dream in your eyes. Awake! Speak to me!

“ I can see that you think I am not in my right mind — what difference does it make if I am happy, if I can imagine for a moment that I am happy.”

She rose. The anguish within her seemed to stiffen her like a frost.

“ I must go. It is growing so dark, like winter. Surely a storm must be coming.”

He laughed.

“ Do you not see how bright and pleasant and quiet it is? Winter, you say? Do you not see the sun and the flowers growing all around? ”

He became lost in thought and sat staring at her like one under a spell.

She breathed quickly and her voice came sharp and hard.

“ I think it is time for us to come back to realities.”

He rose. His eyes grew deep and burning under the heavy brows.

“ Yes, that which we both recognize, that which forms the substance of our poor lives . . . which cannot be seen by dull eyes, or perceived by cold hearts . . . that powerful, eternal reality within us, let it conquer for life and death, let us experience it in all its joy and terror —— ”

There arose within her an intense and merciless desire to speak the truth, the cold, hard truth, which could hurt others as well as herself.

“It is laughable to see us sitting here,” she said. “Do you not see that I am old and gray-haired? Do you not know that I have a husband and children? And even if it were not laughable, it is all to no purpose. We do not believe in one another. We never have done so. And other people do not believe in us —— Nor do we deserve that anyone should believe in us — certainly not in me, for I am a wicked creature — and a pity it is for my husband and my children!”

But his thoughts could not be turned.

“No,” he said stubbornly. “There are strength and sweetness in your eyes and in your speech, even when you stand there saying those ugly little words. You may indeed be old and gray as you say, yet still you are Sanpriel. I no longer love you as I once did. My feeling for you is quite different — its source is far deeper — blood has been transformed into a soul. It is thus I love you. . . . I did not want it this way, but I could not help myself. Do you not believe me?”

“Oh, yes! I certainly ought to be very glad.”

For if he wanted to jest, why not?

He came nearer. His voice grew mild.

“Sanpriel, do you know that one minute may be worth a whole life-time? You are gazing so intently — what is it that you see?”

She did not answer, but stood there with white face and brows drawn as if in pain.

Suddenly the blood surged up, coloring her cheeks, her face, her neck.

She did not herself know that she had started on in front of him.

She began to speak, but her voice shook so that she could not do so for a moment. Then it came with great firmness.

“God knows I cannot go on with this! Nor have I any right to do so! I must go home to my family!”

“To all that which is not yours?”

“To all that which shall be mine. But first . . . all this time . . . the reason I have come up here . . . it was perhaps — because there was something I wanted to say to you. . . . I wanted to tell you that the reason I left you *that time* was because I did not want to be loved in that way by the man whom I loved. . . . I did not want to wait and see it cast aside . . . see it wither and fade away, that which I felt was eternal. That you could forget me, if only for one little hour, I could not endure. . . .

“Ah, it was you yourself who were the cause of my going. It was your fault that I went where I should not! For I have wandered along dark ways — It was you whom I loved! You who shattered all my ideals! So I have come to think

at last that perhaps it was best as it was — best for you. And now do not grudge me the comforting thought that it has been good for me to suffer as I have. You must not think that I am done with all this that I have suffered, all this that I have sinned. I am living it over again, suffering it continually, again and again.”

She stood wringing her hands. Her voice sounded like that of a child in trouble.

“There is more that I ought to tell you,” she murmured — “but I cannot. If I could only hide myself from it, in the darkness of eternity!” —

He had sat down and then risen again. He could not stand still, but passed on in front of her, then came back. A burning impatience took possession of him. Anger flashed in his eyes.

“You may keep your comforting thought. No, I do not grudge you that. How much you women might spare us if you would only take up the work that nature has given you to do — there where you are all powerful, there where we are like children! — This secret woman’s pride, I do not understand it! Just when she might do something, lift us to a higher plain and clarify our vision, then she folds her garments about her and withdraws.”

He stood in front of her, speaking vehemently, brokenly.

“And how did you love me? Why did you

never try to know the man whom you loved? You always kept at a distance even when you were near. You were never my friend."

He continued bitterly:

"And how is it that women in general love us? What kind of love is it that they have for us? . . . The love which takes great responsibility — that they know nothing about.

"You were never my friend. You failed just when I was in greatest need. It was my mother who came to my rescue."

He stopped, out of breath.

Then he stepped forward again, close to her.

"You should not have done that," he added quietly and in a milder tone. "You left me just when I needed you most. I was bad, weak — but there was something better in my nature."

She looked into his eyes.

"Then you must forgive me," she said slowly, "for having done you such a great wrong. You are right. The way in which I thought of you — perhaps it was only another way of thinking of myself. I remember now I was jealous of your mother. I always thought that she stood between us."

He looked up sharply.

"That she never did. She never had any desire to do so. But I have never allowed any woman to come between me and my mother."

“ Yes, now you can see. I ought indeed to have kissed the dust under her feet — but I wanted that you should think only of me. . . . I certainly thought of no one but myself. Even at that time I was a wicked creature.”

“ Forgive me! I must have hurt you very greatly that you should speak in such a way about yourself.”

“ It might be well for us to meet once more . . . and talk matters over. But it is not worth while that we should come here again. . . . I mean, I would prefer that I should never see you again. God knows how I wish it! ”

“ Give me a ray of hope — and do not take it from me again. If you could — if we could — would you come back to me again? ”

“ Forgive me! I could never, never again believe in you! I have become such a poor sort of creature that I can believe in nothing.”

He sat down, deathly pale, as if struck by a blow.

She stared at him. Was it so bad what she had said?

“ I am sorry. It is not my fault — but I could not do it. I really cannot help it.”

She wanted to comfort him.

“ It does not matter. It is of no consequence. It is merely . . . this has indeed been merely a little diversion for you as well as for me ——”

He looked up at her silently, as if in supplication. He rose, went over and bent his knee before her.

“Forgive me — for the great wrong which I now see that I have done you. But in spite of it all you are still Sanpriel.”

She turned quickly and hurried on. She stopped and faced about with a hasty, repellent motion, and her voice sounded hard and imperious.

She wished to go on alone.

Then she passed on hurriedly, uncertainly, as though she might fall at any moment.

When she reached the garden all was still. Every light was out.

She did not go up to her room. She went into the big parlor. They had forgotten to lock the door.

Almost unconsciously she went over to the piano and stood there. Why was it that she suddenly had a desire to sing? She, who had not sung since Birger was born.

She remained standing, gazing at the piano. She felt as though she were in the midst of a great illumination, as though she were surrounded by some mysterious presence. Was it the Golden Dream — the dream of her youth?

For the moment a burning joy arose within her

. . . something which resembled happiness as she once had thought it to be.

—— So he still thought of her . . . had loved her — loved her now, *now* ——

With a quick movement she opened the piano. She would sing his little song, the one she had sung the first time they were together, and so many times afterward. She wondered if she could remember it. As no one slept in that part of the house she would not be heard.

She struck a few chords and hummed softly. She did not know whether she could sing at all or not.

Then she smiled.

For the voice which for so many years had been hidden away and forgotten, was indeed still there — changed, she herself could tell that; but it was there, although it had lost its fullness. Faint and timid, in trembling notes it came, and filled the air with soft, sweet melody.

It was a light alto, one of those rare voices that can never grow sharp or harsh. With dreamy grace the tones followed one another, all in gentle harmony.

It was a voice akin to the sighing of the forest, to the soft melancholy of the night ——

It was long past midnight. The dawn had begun to break.

She rose and closed the piano. She felt a solemn, quiet joy. She would hurry up to her room. But when she reached the door she stood there as if paralyzed.

On one of the chairs outside, with his head in a listening attitude toward the door — he sat, all shrunk together, weeping.

Then fear took hold of her, mingled with a wild feeling of joy. Everything swam before her. She supported herself against the door.

No, she must not again be tempted by anything momentary — must not forget herself again. She would thank God for these moments of consolation, and then quietly go her way, knowing there was nothing more.

But involuntarily she found herself standing beside him. He stretched out his hand to her. She took it and pressed it to her brow.

Suddenly she clung to him — as if seeking refuge and help.

It was but a second. Then she realized what she had done.

It was from him she must save herself.

And she fled.

She stood at her window, listening as in a dream to the hollow roar, still half suppressed, of an approaching storm.

Then it was upon her. A dark storm-wind which bent the forest. It did her good to see it.

She sank down in front of the window with her head on the sill. His face rose before her — dark, almost unrecognizable, with eyes which seemed to stare at her from the blackest gloom. . . . Had she heard a cry from the depths of a secret grief?

She half rose.

That this force within her soul, this power which she felt streaming through her, as the part of herself which could not die — that this should be hemmed in, cut off . . . this dream in her heart, which Arvid and the children had never cared for . . . that it should wither, die! It was so terribly incomprehensible . . . so utterly without meaning. . . .

With difficulty she dragged herself to her bed. It was strange that she had not lain down immediately. She surely must have known how deadly tired she was. She hid her face in the pillows.

Then she rose again. There was no rest. She sat there all bent over, motionless.

Then she smiled, full of scorn for herself.

“No,” she whispered. “That which is past cannot come again.”

It seemed to her that she could neither think nor feel any longer. She knew only, that she

must go home to all those strange people — to Arvid and the children. She felt the waves closing over her, dark and noiseless.

One by one tears filled her eyes. They were cold and bitter tears, the kind which never comfort, but drop slowly, one by one.

CHAPTER XIII

THERE was an unusual disturbance down on the lawn, quite early that morning.

Thora Thammers went over to the window, leaned out to look, then forced herself to remain there listening. For now she was going to begin to interest herself in other people, it was indeed her duty.

Almost everyone was down there, even Fru Iversen and the little Danish countess, who seldom showed themselves before luncheon.

A man had been found lying dead drunk right under the countess' window.

She had taken it as quite personal that he should have lain down just there, and the German General and the Adjunct were so excited over it that Fru Iversen felt that she ought to come to the man's assistance.

"Poor fellow, he was certainly not hard to please. He had not even stirred."

The Dean's wife and the journalist, Betsey Schaum, came over. They thought it was not the right way to do at all.

Over by the storehouse stood Fru Liss and Don Miguel. They were more interested in the star-

ling, which was shrieking and calling for help against the crow. They threw stones, but the starling did not move. He knew that they were aimed at the crow.

Then Fru von Asten came out and beckoned to Thora. She and the engineer were going for a tramp up the mountain to a cave, and she wanted her to go with them.

Fru Thammers was such an excellent person, very comfortable to have along, for she never noticed anything.

Fru von Asten had of late begun to show her a sort of distant, undefined tenderness and had invited her to afternoon tea, together with the huge young engineer with the sleepy blue eyes and the little light mustache.

Sometimes she had joined them, although she thought it foolish that she found it so difficult to say no.

But to-day she could.

Fru von Asten said good-by with a smile in which there was no trace of tenderness, and went off with her Mars.

Thora Thammers followed them with her eyes, exerting herself to think of them.

"She would like to scratch me. I am now relegated to the position of fallen angel."

She tried to keep her thoughts on Fru von Asten and her Mars, but it was difficult. Every-

thing seemed to slip away, and by the time they were out of sight she had forgotten that they existed.

Then she tried to put her mind on the others around. She seemed to feel more certain of them.

Student Adelson came along with his fresh young face fairly beaming. Shading his eyes from the sun as he looked up, he called to her:

“Better come down and go fishing with us! The pike are lying on the surface of the water dreaming of the blue sky . . . and the perch are running straight into the rocks along the shore, and wondering what kind of fish they can be, the great yellow meadow flowers. . . . Come and go along!”

She shook her head.

Then Fru Gyllenskold came out. She gazed at all the people in mild surprise while she pulled on her long gloves.

She nodded to Thora Thammers.

“Don’t you want to take a morning walk across the meadow for the sake of old times? If it would not bore you.”

From the opposite direction came Samuel Stern. Thora Thammers had seen him coming in the distance.

“How fortunate for him that nothing affects him,” she thought.

“No, are you there?” interrupted Fru Gylenskjold as she touched him on the shoulder with her elegant little stick. “Indeed, you ought to be punished. I haven’t seen you for ten days. . . . I just want to tell you . . . I am beginning to believe that ennui is not fatal.”

He lifted his hat, smiling.

“Your Highness! Why are you bored? Have you not this long time been convinced of the mediocrity of your fellow beings? You are not making allowance for that. I am sorry for you.”

“Sir? It is I who am sorry for you. . . . But now that is over. For the one who knows that sorrow comes from setting one’s heart on something — he does as the rhinoceros does, withdraws into solitude. It is not I, but an Indian sage, who says that. Are you not going with me, little Fru Thora? Then I’ll have to go alone.”

“We will follow at a respectful distance, Wolf and I.”

Thora Thammers withdrew into her room. She could endure it no longer.

Shortly afterward she took her hat and went out.

She started down the path that led toward Casa Santa. As she walked it became clear in her mind that it was there she wished to go.

The little house lay on a slope under the hill with a garden toward the lake. She could see

Madame Harder moving about, pruning the shrubs and tying up the vines. Beyond her were two boys weeding. When Adèle Harder saw her she came to meet her. Thora Thammers felt that she had not been mistaken. There was something soothing merely in the touch of her hand — a tenderness, as it were, which seemed to embrace her.

She stood looking around.

“I had no idea there was so much here,” she said.

Adèle Harder laughed. And when she laughed her face was beautiful. There was something about her smile which conquered everything.

Thora Thammers felt a sense of security, although she did not for an instant know what it was she wanted there.

“I had no idea there was so much here,” she said again.

“Is it not so? Here you will find your friends from Flyen, and some others as well. It is my delight, let me say my fad, to discover Nature’s boundaries and then to persuade her to shift them a little. I experiment both on plants — and human beings. . . . See here! And look there!” She pointed toward the two boys. “I weed out, I sow . . . and it gives me great pleasure. . . . Iver and Hans, you may go to the dairy. Now we’ll sit down here under this hop vine where we can look out over the lake. You are tired.”

"Yes." She rested her head on the green trellis.

"How comfortable one feels with you," she murmured. And she sat gazing at her in silence. Again she was considering what it was she wanted here.

"Yes," she said softly, as if in answer to her own thoughts.

She straightened up.

"I have come, because I want you to talk to me a little. Some one told me once that your eyes could influence even a tiger. Look at me. Let me feel their influence."

Adèle Harder took her hand in both her own.

"You should be a little more careful of yourself. You go about so much alone. It is not good for you."

She did not answer, merely looked up at her, shading her eyes from the light with her hand. Her eyelids were swollen, and the balls felt dry and burning.

Adèle Harder rose.

"You must have a little wine first."

She went in and came back again immediately. Thora followed her with her eyes as she went and came, then mechanically drank and ate what was brought her.

Adèle Harder sat down opposite her and began to sew industriously.

"This is a blouse for Iver. It is his birthday to-morrow. Now you can watch the lake. Notice how peacefully it lies there after last night's storm."

There was a pause.

"Are you comfortable?"

"Yes." Thora Thammers looked up and tried to smile. "There was some one up there who called you a queen without a country; but Merchant Stern thought that you ruled not only a country, but a kingdom — an invisible one — of the best forces of life. I think it must be true, for it is so comfortable here."

She closed her eyes and grew deathly pale for an instant. A thrill of joy had passed through her as she spoke of him, a tremor at the mere mention of his name.

Madame Harder smiled.

"Omar Pasha is so generous — but I am to talk to you," she continued gayly. "What shall I tell you?"

"Something about yourself."

There was a moment of silence. She looked up from her work.

"I was young once," she said slowly. "What was my happiness at that time was shattered. I saved myself by taking up something else. It is best to turn from small things to great."

Thora glanced at the pure, peaceful expression,

and at that moment bitterly realized the distance between them.

"Yes," she said, "such things sound very well if one is good enough. There was some one once who called Christianity a divine invention. It is that, for it is merciful. It closes the doors on the depths of suffering. Man has nothing to do with that. There is a loving Father who arranges everything for the best. So the little happiness becomes a big one."

Madame Harder looked at her for a moment. Then she said:

"My religion is not to sit and wait until everything shall be arranged by a Supreme Being. It is to fight the evil and to do good so long as I can. And my happiness! It is not my own little personal happiness that grows into the larger, it is something entirely different — it is the faculty of being able to think of others."

She paused. Then she added, with a little smile:

"The entrance to the depths of suffering is never closed. There is always an avenue of approach for one who wishes to go down. Most people dare not, and cannot. Some do so and never return."

She glanced inquiringly at her.

"Sorrow acts so differently on different people. Some are strengthened by it, others crushed. But

it is my religion that one must not allow oneself to be crushed.

“I also know something about suffering,” she added softly. “I have tried not to be weak, but to rise above it and free myself from it. . . . We must learn to make use of it, to transform it into a power for work.”

Thora Thammers straightened up involuntarily. The blood rose to her cheeks, and she spoke impetuously.

“But that little personal happiness which you consider so unimportant, is nevertheless a force, the best incentive to work. One needs to be happy in order to be able to work. I mean, the fact that one is happy makes one strong, and the fact that one has lost his happiness, or has never possessed it, that fact takes his power from him.”

She could not get away from her own ideas. Her heart shrank back and passionately urged her to set up this earthly joy against the stern requirements of the heavenly law. She must defend herself against the impossible.

“I cannot . . . and I do not want to,” she again interrupted. “One thing is certain: in order to be able to accomplish anything one needs to belong to earth. This little earthly happiness . . . if one has that, then one can grow still more, can do much more ——”

“Yes, but you are thinking only of one kind

of happiness, and you believe there is nothing else in the world. It is just that fact that makes people unhappy.”

She took her hand in both her own and drew her down by her side.

Thora avoided her gaze.

“One must look about and busy oneself with something,” she continued after a pause.

“Do you know what my dream is? It is to be able to accomplish something, be it never so little, in the work of advancing mankind . . . and to do it in such a way that each step forward may take less time, may cost less blood and anguish. You are right; one needs to have faith in order to join in such work — that is the one invincible weapon that we have. With that we shall some day overcome the miseries of this world. . . .

“Come, join us! Remember, it is through women that the redemption of the earth shall come. Let us work while it is day. Let us not grow weary in well-doing. For, all in good time, we shall reap the harvest, provided we do not grow weary.”

“Yes, you have the courage to take up the work; but I, the earth-bound, cannot. I think those are crushing words, torturing to one’s senses, cruel to mankind — we shall reap the harvest, provided we do not grow weary! What irony in

the expression! It is like scornful laughter directed at us, poor worms in the dust. For we are always weary, always. We shall never reap the harvest!"

"Those are the words of life, wonderful words! They will some day gather all our forces into one impetuous will, and kindle a fire from soul to soul. Then it will no longer move so slowly, this work of establishing peace on earth."

Thora stared at her. The expression of her face was inspiring, and in her voice was the note of a living faith.

She turned away, blushing for herself.

Again she rose with a hasty movement.

"How fortunate you are — and so full of courage! While I — I am afraid of life. Teach me, lift me up, if you can. I call myself a Christian, but I am not. Everything seems to me so unspeakably empty. I see no God, either in the heavens, or on earth. . . . But you see him. Christians move about the earth on wings and attain to all things heavenly. I am bound, tied fast. Loose me, take me with you."

She sank down on the bench and broke into a flood of tears. She struggled to control herself.

"You must excuse me, but I am so tired."

Adèle Harder waited for a moment. Then she said quietly:

"Take for your abiding help the all-sufficing

Lord's Prayer. Peace goes with it. And do you not love the old Psalms? Think what they have been to mankind. Go to them; they will give you peace. They bring rest and quiet to the weary."

She rose and placed her hand on the bowed head.

"You want me to give you some of my faith," she said sorrowfully. "You know, one never gets anything free . . . What you would live upon — you must win for yourself. . . ."

"Sit still and calm yourself. You see, one must endure that which cannot be changed. One owes that to oneself, is it not true? And it is well to take refuge where big things grow. Then one comes to see how small the little things are. . . ."

"Also one must make an effort to help others. I know of nothing better. If one can only help to bring a bit of the light of heaven down into the gloom of this daily life, and can have a share in scattering love around here on earth! Continuous growth is the necessary condition of all progress. One must teach men to cease hating one another, then perhaps some day they may learn to love one another."

Thora Thammers lifted her head and gazed at her dully.

"Ah, but all that is so impossible! For as one

lives, something is taken from one . . . the best."

"On the contrary. As one lives, something is gained. Our childhood and youth hold germs of promise. Life is much greater when these develop and the promises unfold."

"But that never happens. They all die within one and everything grows cold. How I wish that I could ——"

"One must not be satisfied with wishing. You know that to a certain extent one creates his own life. Within ourselves in the depths of our nature, it is there we find what we have use for."

Thora Thammers shook her head with a forced smile.

"Within me — there is nothing left . . . for — no, I cannot tell how I have suffered!"

"One can never do that. There is always so much that cannot be expressed," she added quietly. "How infinitesimally small is that which can be expressed, compared with that for which we can find no words — that which includes, not only our suffering, but our deepest joy, our strength and our hope — and our faith."

She rose, pale and moved. Memories which had slumbered within her were awakened again.

"To live is not always to get just what one may once have desired. It is rather to feel that one has a soul, and to know what one owes to it.

“And ought we not to keep in mind the good things we possess? There is our immortal longing which buoys us up like wings. Then there is the sanctuary of our own hearts where we may take refuge. For this let us rejoice. Let us be glad for everything as we find it. The only thing that is worthy of us is to be able to use everything just as it is — and to use it *well*.”

Thora sat silently gazing before her.

Adèle Harder once more grew calm and cheery. She looked over at Thora with her mild expression and began gathering up her work.

“Now you will stay and take luncheon with me. Come, let us sit over there where we can breathe in the fragrance of the forest, and the wild flowers, and the sea.”

Thora followed her mechanically; then stopped and stood looking at her as if not knowing what she did.

“Yes,” she said at last, slowly. “I am sorry for all the wrong that I have done, all the evil that I have thought. Now I see it all.”

Adèle Harder put her arm around her and drew her to herself.

“I also have made the mistake of being unkind. I have every reason to scorn myself. One never does what one ought to do. But now there must be at least one thing for which you are glad.”

“There is indeed. I am glad because I came

to you, and because you have talked with me." She tried to smile.

"But there is so much for which you should be glad. For instance, that the sun returns each day, what about that?"

She stopped, looked at her and smiled.

"Is it so difficult to believe? The world is indeed full of miracles. What can not come forth from a mere handful of earth? Is not every little blossom a wonder? And then the magnificent thought, that one has work — and can share in the preparation for that greater time which is yet to come, can help in the building of freedom's highway, along which mankind is some day to advance to higher conditions. Is it not true that this is a great privilege?"

Thora Thammers looked at her and again tried to smile.

"Yes! And so all things are finally evened up and thus quietly brought to a conclusion.

"But now I must go, I cannot stay here. I am going home and must go and pack my trunk."

Adèle Harder silently embraced her, then followed her to the gate.

"Let me hear from you."

Thora Thammers bowed, took her hand, kissed it, and pressed it to her burning brow. Then she smiled, passed hastily on, and disappeared at the turn in the road.

Adèle Harder stood gazing after her. There was a shadow in her bright glance.

But then the boys came back, and the young girls from the dairy who were to read with her.

CHAPTER XIV

THORA THAMMERS straightway began to pack.

She did not go down to luncheon, but had something brought up to her room. She was ready so that she might have gone on the afternoon train; but she preferred to wait and drive over at midnight in time for the morning train.

In this way she could slip away entirely unnoticed. Then, too, she could go up on Flyen — just once more.

But it would not do to go before the usual time.

She remained in her room the entire day. She had locked her door, and finally, after adjusting her toilet, she sat down to read.

Several of the ladies came to inquire for her. Student Adelson wanted to come up and show her his fish; but the maid had been instructed that she could not see any one.

While they were all in at dinner she went down — and up on Flyen, where she had sat the evening before.

She sat down to wait — calmly, as if she were

coming there again the next evening, and every evening after.

She had no idea how time passed. She did not know whether she had sat there for two hours, or for a quarter of an hour, when suddenly she was startled by feeling Wolf's cold nose under her hand.

She rose. Samuel Stern came straight toward her, looking somewhat surprised.

She did not move.

A troubled expression came over his face.

"What is it? I did not expect to find you here."

"Nor am I here — except for the last time. I am going away — I start to-night. . . . Yes, I must go home. . . . I am going home to Arvid. But there was something I wanted to tell you first." She repeated it several times and her lips grew white. "I am so sorry for it all. . . . You were right in what you said. I have always thought only of myself."

He laid his hand on her arm and gently forced her to sit down. He seemed not to have heard what she said, and not really to understand that now they were to separate.

He began with some idle questions, entirely irrelevant.

"You must not go." He sat down beside her, anxiously watching her face in its stony silence.

“Why are you so pale,” he whispered — “so deathly pale? Is it the wind in the forest? It sounds so threatening. . . . You, who understand the speech of the wind, what does it say, when it seems so angry?”

“It says,” she answered slowly, “that all is over.” . . .

At an involuntary movement on his part she turned toward him.

“It makes no difference to you — to-morrow, or the day after, you will have forgotten me again.”

“I shall never more forget you!”

“To-morrow you will have forgotten me,” she said again, quietly, persistently.

“Never again can I forget you, Thora, that I promise, for you do not know how I love to look at your face. When you were young, I never felt for you then — nor for any one else — what I now feel for you. Do you not yet believe that I love you now, perhaps as you wish to be loved?”

She sat with her head bowed in her hands.

Suddenly she raised her head, and a cold gleam came into her eyes. Her voice, at first a mere whisper, soon rose to an unnatural pitch.

“There is something that I have not dared to think of . . . so I have kept it locked up in my inner consciousness. But now I must bring it forth, so that you may hear it. I should like to

shriek it out so that all mankind would know what I am. I can no longer endure that you should think better of me than I deserve. You must know what I am, so that you can despise me —

“One thing only have I sought — I wanted to find happiness for myself. . . . That time that you disappointed me . . . I could have killed you then! Afterward I lost my bearings. I thought there surely must be happiness for me somewhere — I believed it was with Arvid. . . . But it was not there. And I had no peace. I was looking for something that would make life wonderful. If such a thing were to be found on earth I wanted to possess it — I have always been so greedy, and have thought only of myself.

“There came a time when I wavered in my duty to my home — to my husband and my children. My thoughts became centered on another man. I was starving and consumed with thirst. It was like an intoxicating drink. I dreamed my dream again. I thought the magnificence of earth belonged to me. Then came the hour of awakening when I found that I was poorer than before . . . and I saw how hideous it was. In the cup of life which I had quaffed, there was bitterness — the bitterness of death!”

She turned her head toward him.

“I have told you this so that you may despise me as I do myself.”

He rose. It cost him an effort to speak.

“You have had time to forget all this, it seems to me.”

His voice was quiet with suppressed pain.

“I remember it all more distinctly than ever.”

“That is because you have forced yourself to recall it — for my sake. You should not have done so, for I have forgotten it again.”

She turned away.

“Thora! We have done one another great injury. Forgive me! Yet white is your color. See, the white butterflies are still here, following you.”

She pressed both hands to her breast.

“You must not speak this way to me.”

“Thora, what is the matter? What is it? Why are you going?”

She did not answer. Her eyes stared vacantly before her.

“You seem so cold! Thora!”

She turned hastily toward him. Her face flushed.

“I am glad of it, for then I have gained something.”

“You have lost. . . . Forgive me! It is my fault.”

“Oh, it does not matter,” she said faintly. “It is so often that one means nothing by what one says —” Her voice sounded like broken crystal.

He stepped in front of her. His eyes grew dark and burning.

“Thora, here in this silence with only the night to hear us, you must listen. I must tell you how I love you! . . . And you! Give me a word, that I may have something to comfort me. I will come this evening and knock at your door just to hear your voice.”

“You must not talk to me this way.”

“Thora — is there nothing in your heart that tells you that you can believe me now?”

She pressed her hands to her brow and closed her eyes. There arose within her a wild desire to throw herself in his arms and believe it.

She paused for a moment. Then she said quietly:

“No! It is best for you . . . and I am all right now. For such things, one never suffers again . . . I mean, a second time.”

She smiled, rose and stretched out her hand.

“Farewell! Amuse yourself as long as you can — indeed, I mean it,” she added gently. “I did not mean to hurt you.”

His lips trembled.

“Thank you! When are you coming up again?”

She looked into his eyes for a moment.

“Do you not understand?” she whispered. “Never again!”

She hurried on before him, down the slope — and reached her room without meeting any one.

A pang shot through her heart as she saw her trunks all packed and ready to go.

So she must — she must go.

She sat down by the window and looked out at the fading twilight.

The fir trees over by the storehouse had lost their bluish tinge and had grown dark green in color. There came Fru von Asten and her Mars. How happy they looked!

Suddenly the thought struck her: Never again would anyone care for her, Thora Thammers — it was all over — never, never again!

For the first time a sense of great loneliness took possession of her. She shuddered. An irresistible chill passed through her veins —

She would not have it. She rose and went over to the table to pick up the few last things.

There lay a telegram and a letter. She snatched up the letter. It must have come that morning, but she had not noticed it. The telegram was still older. It must have been delayed at the office. It was from Arvid's sister, and said that Arvid was very ill. She must come home.

She tore open the letter. That also was from Arvid's sister, written a day later. Arvid had come home happy and well after his sailing trip with his friends. The day after he had enter-

tained them at dinner. That night he had had a stroke and had died a few hours after.

She sat dazed — reading alternately, first the letter, then the telegram. She could not understand. It was not possible that Arvid was dead.

She was indeed just on the point of going home to him to do penance — to love him and see if she could be of use to him for the time they had left together ——

And now, after that long, empty life, not a word could she say to him. They needed to talk together. She needed his forgiveness. He needed that she should consider him a little bit. Arvid . . . he was after all like a child . . . it was so easy to please him. . . .

She must go home to Arvid. But all was quiet with him now — no fever in the air, no laughter along with the hustle and bustle ——

She was sorry for Arvid, that he was dead, he who enjoyed life so much. It would have been better if it had been Samuel Stern . . . or better still, if it had been she. Oh, would to God that it were she!

—No, she was not to be so fortunate. She would have to stay here and accept her fate — for now there came to her the thought of all she had to regret . . . from all the days and years of the past it came, pressing down upon her. . . . And how endlessly, unceasingly it would torture her!

She laughed aloud. Strange, how she could sit there imagining those things! Of course Arvid was not dead. He never had been dead when she came home. On the contrary, they had always been so comfortable together; and now this time it would be better than before ——

She sat there motionless, all shrunk together, waiting, not merely for the carriage which was to take her to the station, but for Arvid. He must surely come again. In any case they must have a talk together.

When the carriage came there was no one around. A storm had come up, for which she was thankful. It was a relief to feel the rain beating on her face and the wind tugging at her garments.

She ordered the man to drive on down the hill.

When they reached the gate there was some one there who opened it, then stood gazing at her in deep silence.

She looked up. It was Samuel Stern.

She bowed her head and passed him silently.

Then he asked softly: "Are you going home to Arvid?"

She heard, but she did not turn.

"Yes, I am going home to Arvid," she answered slowly, but firmly.

III

*Sweet as a song that once consoled our pain,
But never will be sung to us again,
Is thy remembrance.*

*Now the hour of rest has come to thee,
Now the hour of rest has come to thee,
Mother dear, sleep!
Sleep, darling, sleep!
It is best. It is best.*

LONGFELLOW

CHAPTER XV

SEVERAL years had passed. Forest Home Hotel had gotten the reputation of being a place where people liked to come again. It had a goodly list of regular visitors, and the house was always full.

To Marit Hennerud's intense satisfaction the German General and Baron was among the regular guests. And as he liked to bring with him some of his family and friends, there had at last come to be quite a select company of the nobility.

The Danish element likewise had shown a tendency to increase. Instead of the single little Countess Mohrenberg there were now something over a half dozen representatives from Denmark.

Thus five years had passed since these people had met here for the first time. This fact they discovered one day out on the veranda, and they were all unanimously agreed that it was very strange how time could pass so rapidly.

Among the Norwegians Principal De Roch had been one of the most loyal.

There were some who still wanted to call him Adjunct, but that would not do now. For after occupying the position of Assistant Principal for

three years he had now risen to that of Principal. His dignity of manner had increased — also his concern for his environment, which had come to be a sort of monomania with him. That he should be so concerned about himself seemed to him perfectly natural, since he knew so well what people ought to be.

Fru Sahn was also among those who had not missed a year. Time had likewise given her added power. With the greatest ease she could now lay before people difficult questions that they could not possibly explain.

The Hemb family had not failed either. They were always among the first to arrive. Two years before Fröken Hemb had met her husband. The world had begun to look brighter to her, and she no longer had such an irritating effect upon Fru Wanda Arescho.

Fru Thamar Gyllenskjold was not there that summer. They missed her, but felt freer.

However, they missed Merchant Stern more. He had been there every year, but usually came toward the close of the summer. That was because of the change in the hunting season.

The Dean's wife thought it was very uncertain about his coming this year. For one thing, there was that unpleasant episode of the year before in connection with his wife and the engineer. For another thing, he had just lost his mother.

They continued to talk about Merchant Stern's wife and the engineer, who had gone off in a hurry to America and had married there. Fru Iversen did not think he had taken it much to heart. She had met him a few times during the winter.

There were some who felt sorry for the engineer and were afraid that his gigantic strength would not be sufficient to protect him — nor even the new weapon of destruction which he had recently patented.

Principal De Roch had gone around taking his annual census. He reported that this year also their number would be practically complete. The only one whom he considered entirely lost to them was Fru Thammers, who had not been there for the last three years.

But Fru Iversen announced that this year Fru Thammers was coming, after all, with a young niece. Fru Iversen had received this information first-hand. She had been in Bergen in the spring and had visited Fru Thammers, who had been left so much alone since the Colonel's death. Her daughter was married and living in Germany, and her son had given up his studies and had taken a position with a commercial house in London. So she had taken charge of her husband's young niece. It was touching to see how she cherished the Colonel's memory. He had been very fond of the

young Dyveke, so now Fru Thammers could not do enough for her.

Fru Iversen continued to talk of the young girl, who was the sweetest sight one could wish to see. But the physicians were anxious about her, and wanted her to come up here. She had had three brothers and sisters, all of whom had been taken with consumption between the ages of eighteen and twenty, and had died within a short time. They thought the air up here would help to tide her over this period.

Some of the ladies began to talk about Madame Harder, who had been there through all the early part of the summer. At heart they were not at all sorry that she had now gone.

As the event proved this time, Fru Iversen was right.

A fortnight had passed, when one morning at the breakfast table they heard that Fru Thammers had arrived. The Dean's wife, who was her neighbor, had been in to see her.

Yes, of course she had grown old — after all that trouble — but there was something about her — her eyes were just as young and dreamy-looking as ever, and her complexion was remarkably fresh and clear. The Dean's wife thought that she might take a little credit for that.

But the seventeen-year-old Dyveke! The Dean's wife had never thought to see any one with a skin so transparently white and rose-colored.

The doors and windows stood open, and from the veranda Fru Thammers could see them in the dining room.

"Now they are talking us over," she remarked to Dyveke, who was inside.

In an instant Dyveke was by her side — delicate, slender, supple as a willow. She did not walk. Her movements were like those of a bird.

She bent down and kissed Fru Thammers.

"Good morning, dear little mother. How amusing that they should be talking about us, and isn't it fun that in such a short time we should be here!"

"Yes, but you must get strong now."

Dyveke laughed out as she doubled up her fists.

"Am I not strong? Do you know, little Aunt Mother, I have decided that I am going to gain strength from all these people up here. Yes, I am going to enjoy life here immensely."

Fru Thammers laughed at her expressions — she could never make them strong enough and had begun to make them up herself.

"Come, we must go down now to breakfast."

It looked as though Dyveke were going to keep

her word, for before two days had passed she was a favorite with everyone.

Such delicate grace and such charming enthusiasm they never had seen before. Her laughter was so merry that not even the birds of heaven could produce such music — everyone listened for it, and they all had to laugh with her.

She had all the young people at her feet. To the older ladies she was a little child, who shocked them with her incredible boisterousness, and yet who received permission to do things that no one else was allowed to do.

And as for the men — even the older and more serious minded among them — when she appeared in the morning with her pink cheeks and golden hair, she seemed to them like a young Aurora rising and waving her scepter above them.

Principal De Roch had least of all been able to protect himself. In the consternation of the first few days he had felt himself justified in bestowing a number of severe glances, although in the end he had been obliged to submit.

Unmoved by his dignity she had eaten philopenas and drunk healths with him, while all his efforts to bring about a more suitable state of affairs had grown perceptibly weaker.

Nor did it help matters for him to remonstrate with her for being so earthly. In vain did he explain to her one day, that her delight in material

things was excessive, and that long ago Thomas Aquinas had uttered a warning for those people who were possessed of nine senses instead of five, and who, with the blood rushing to their heads like fire, went to excess even in those days.

Dyveke had clapped her hands together in delight.

“ Oh, Principal De Roch, you are really the most amusing man I know, for that is just exactly the way I am! How the blood does rush to my head! Oh, the world, how I do enjoy it — more than any one on earth! ”

And she was off.

Not a week had passed before the young men were all in love with her. She enjoyed it. In her young, heartless way she made fun of them. She discovered that her slightest whim was a law to them, and she used her power with wild recklessness, at times making them appear ridiculous, all on her account. Fru Thammers was astounded at first. Then she grew frightened at the responsibility she had taken upon herself. She began to remonstrate and forbid, but with little avail.

Dyveke had her own way of disarming her. She herself could not explain why she should feel such a pang at the heart, merely at the way in which Dyveke looked at her when she said: “ You must let me do it, little Mother, for I just must! ”

Marit Hennerud was among those who came under the yoke of Dyveke's tyranny. She was persuaded to give her full authority over one of the boats, and Dyveke began to carry on all sorts of sport down below.

There was a little path leading up through a dense clump of trees. She would untie the boat and draw it up close along the shore. Then, starting from the top of the hill, she would run down through the wood, and with one bound land in the boat in such a way as to send it shooting out over the water.

At first only a few saw her. Soon others discovered what was going on, but it was strongly impressed upon them that the old folks must not know about it.

However, the spectators steadily increased in numbers. They were completely carried away by her daring. For, as she came rushing down through the trees, wild and radiant, with her long bright hair streaming behind her, and with a little shriek sprang into the boat — one could think of nothing but a dryad or one of Diana's nymphs.

She confessed that she had seen something similar in a circus when she was small, and since then she had always thought how fine it would be to try it herself.

But she did not like to have all the others

around. She enjoyed it most when she could steal away entirely alone — or if only one other were there.

That other one was the General's nephew, the handsome young Tyrolese, Baron Crone.

For he was so frail. He was going to die soon, and he sat there so quietly. He never said a word, but merely sat there staring at her with his great black eyes.

But finally this as well as other escapades came to Fru Thammers' ear. Among other things, the story that one young man had almost lost his life for her sake.

This most certainly could not go on. She must talk seriously with her.

Then Dyveke was seized with such a violent outburst of grief that Fru Thammers grew frightened. She threw herself into her arms and whispered, half choked with sobs:

“Little Mother, do you not understand that I must hurry and see how everything is?”

And there came into her eyes an expression which gave Fru Thammers a better understanding — an expression which she never could forget. There was a hidden, secret terror in the young mind. In spite of the assurances of the physicians, she had a presentiment that her summer of life would be short.

It was as if Death had passed through the room with a finger on his lips and a smile in his eye.

Fru Thammers pressed her close. She could not say another word.

CHAPTER XVI

FRU THAMMERS had just returned from her usual solitary evening walk when Dyveke came rushing in.

“There is a man down there whom they call Omar Pasha. He has just come, although they have been waiting for him for a long time. Why does he come so late, when the season is so nearly over?”

A change passed over Fru Thammers' face, but she answered quietly: “I think he would probably prefer to be alone this year, for he has had a great loss.”

“But he was so jolly. He brought two dogs with him. Do you know, little Mother, I could easily fall in love with such a man. Indeed I could, he has such a wonderful face. It is magnificent the way it lights up.”

Fru Thammers smiled.

“You are foolish, child. He is an old man and you are a little girl.”

“Pooh, what difference does that make? If people are old that is nothing against them. You are old also, yet I am certainly in love with you. But then, for that matter you are not old, you are

my little young mother — and anyway, I don't like him. He didn't see me once, although we were down there together for an hour. He just seemed to be looking inside of me at something else that wasn't me.

"Little Mother, you mustn't look at me that way. I want everyone to be pleased with me. I am made that way, and everyone must like me. They must."

She laughed. Then tears came to her eyes.

"Indeed, you look so funny and so scared, little Mother."

She had much more to tell about the man, but more especially about the dogs. Wolf had a savage look in his eye, as if he wanted to bite her, but she liked him. She would tame him.

Fru Thammers continued to sit there chattering with Dyveke.

She felt a secret thrill every time Dyveke mentioned that name; but as she became conscious of that fact, she suddenly rose, placing her hand caressingly on Dyveke's head.

"It is late, dear. You must go to bed."

She did not see Samuel Stern the next day. There were two dining-rooms, and he was placed in the small room.

She thought she would certainly meet him somewhere in the course of the day, but she did not see

him. Nor did she see him on Flyen in the evening.

Had their rôles changed? Was it now he who was avoiding her? She smiled sadly. He need not take that trouble.

Four days passed and she had not seen him, for now she also kept out of the way. She thought he no longer went up on Flyen and that reassured her.

But one day as she stood talking with Fru Iversen she saw him coming down from there. Fru Iversen wanted to know if she did not think he was lonesome. One could well understand why he should grieve for such a remarkable mother. They saw but little of him now, yet they all enjoyed him so much. Everything that he said was always so amusing. He was really just the same as ever.

And she did so love to see him come walking along like that. There was something quite irresistible in his entire bearing. Yes, they all thought so.

Fru Thammers agreed with her perfectly.

The next morning she saw him sitting on the little porch in front of his cottage. Perhaps it would do him good if she spoke to him. She would go down there.

Her heart began to beat violently as she started forward, but she forced herself to be calm.

He did not see her.

When she stood in front of him and spoke, he gave a start and his face grew colorless. But it was only for a moment. He reached out his hand.

“Oh, it is you! So you are here!”

His tone was as matter of fact as if it were the most natural thing in the world that she should come down there.

She sat down embarrassed.

“How are you?”

At the same moment they looked at one another. It was a mutually inquiring glance — as if both sought to learn what changes had been wrought by life and time.

It seemed to her that he had not changed. The hair was as thick and curly as ever. The vein in the center of the high forehead stood out just as prominently as it used to, while the mouth, with its expression of firmness, was the same — the lines around it perhaps a trifle deeper.

She looked away. She dared not look in his eyes.

“You have grieved for your husband,” he said. “That is good of you. And you still mourn for him!”

He looked down at her dress.

She did not look up. His tone was so indifferent.

"Yes, I still mourn," she answered slowly. She had difficulty in keeping the tears back. They must not talk together in this way.

"I wanted to find you," she said softly. "I wanted to tell you how often I have thought of you since you lost your mother."

He glanced up at her with a little laugh.

"Oh, indeed! Was that why you came? As to that, you ought not to come here and tell me that my mother is dead. Other people come and say to me: 'Yes, you are indeed fortunate in having your mother.' And some of them come and ask: 'Is your mother living?' I answer them all: 'Yes, God be thanked that my mother lives.' It is much better so. I want to tell every one that I am still so fortunate as to have my mother."

She clasped her hands. The tears dropped slowly down.

"I knew well . . . how you would grieve."

"But I do not grieve at all. I have been such a miserable wretch that now I cannot even grieve. Do you not see how I amuse myself every day?"

She felt very uncomfortable. It was so different from what she had expected. Evidently he would not talk with her about his mother. Was it sacrilege for her to have mentioned her name?

She forced herself to speak in another tone, careless and indifferent like his own.

“You are indeed fortunate in being able to take such pleasure in everything. They are all so glad that you have come, for you are always so entertaining.”

“Humph! I have gotten a reputation for that. If once a man says anything to make people laugh, then forever after they think him amusing. . . . People generally laugh at anything that amuses them —

“Well, how does the company here suit you this year? There is our little Principal. Do you not think his new rank becoming to him?”

She did not answer. This light way of speaking pained her. He seemed to avoid her silent, inquiring glance.

“Is not your wife here this year?”

“My wife?” He looked up sharply. “No, God had mercy upon her and gave her another husband. . . . And you need not pity me! What one loses here on earth one will find again on the moon.”

A tremor passed through her, but she controlled herself.

Without knowing what she was doing, she picked up the book he had been reading.

“You see, I am studying Dante. Melancholia will be punished in hell, he says. We run no risk

on that score, up here in our land of Goshen. We sit here in our bowers, feasting and drinking, and getting off foolish witticisms about Egyptian caserolls and such things. You know how it is. But how are you these days, anyway? I did not think you would come here again."

"Nor did I expect to come, either," she said unsteadily, "but they thought that Dyveke ——"

"Oh, I understand. . . . It is for Dyveke's sake. I hope you will be rewarded for your goodness and will live to derive some comfort from your sacrifice."

She looked at him astonished.

"I consider it a pleasure to do what she asks."

And she began to talk about Dyveke. It was a relief to find something else to talk about.

"Have you seen her?" she asked finally. "She is well now, entirely so. But I am so afraid that she will not escape."

"Yes, I have noticed her. She is a rare blossom, of the sort to which God gives color and beauty, only to be plucked by Death. Let her enjoy herself."

She rose. There was something else, entirely different, that burned in her heart to say, but she could not get it out. She merely said something more about Dyveke, as if that were the only thing of importance to her.

“Her childhood was very sad. This is the first chance she has had for enjoyment.”

“If only it is not all over too soon. People always get everything too late. That has been the way with me. I have only recently gotten my understanding — and so it was with Father Adam.”

She had never heard that story.

“Yes, when he lay at the point of death he sent his son Seth back to the closed Paradise for a bit of the oil of divine mercy to relieve his last agony. The angel on guard would not let Seth in, but he gave him a sprig from one of the trees in Paradise. He was to plant this on Adam’s grave, and when the tree bore fruit then would Adam get that for which he had prayed. . . .

“But you have risen. You are impatient to get back to your little child. She is standing down there waiting for you. I hope the pretty young lady will be gracious and not get angry with me for having kept you.”

“Would you like that I should bring her down here some time? We should be glad to come.”

“Madame, there are limits to my desires. ‘Die Sterne die begehrt man nicht, man freut sich ihrer Pracht.’ ”

She merely answered with a smile, then said good-by and left.

But as she came down the path into the garden a burning blush rose to her cheek.

That little device about Dyveke, for it was a device — she had thought to approach him with the help of Dyveke — he had understood . . . and had repelled her.

It seemed as if she could not get air. Something seemed to rise up from her heart and choke her. She made a great effort to control herself, so as to go on her way calmly.

Suddenly she stopped and looked around. He had said that Dyveke stood there waiting for her; but she was not there; she was nowhere to be seen.

At last she understood. It was merely a cold, polite way of turning her away from himself — to Dyveke. It occurred to her now that perhaps it was her own fault. She had said that it was on Dyveke's account that she had come here, and afterward — she talked only of Dyveke. She had plainly bored him with Dyveke.

And how entirely different from what she had meant. How she would have liked to tell him that if she had dared she would have come for his sake only —

How could she tell him that?

She laughed. For why should he know it? He cared nothing about it. So often she had to laugh at herself. She thought her laugh had grown so strange and mirthless.

She went up to her room and sat down to work. It was a dress for Dyveke that she had not been able to get through with. She dropped her sewing. Nor could she ever get through with herself.

Now, just as it seemed so well understood that all was ended and a thing of the past — here once more everything was changed — worse than before. There had come a new obstacle between them, one that had never been there before.

She picked up her work and began to sew with feverish haste. She asked herself: which was the most bitter of all the bitter experiences she had undergone? Perhaps this, almost — she herself did not know why it seemed to fall so heavily upon her.

She had begun to weep, but hurriedly dried her tears. Dyveke always became so distressed when she discovered that she had been weeping. Dyveke's love for her was indeed a gift from Heaven. She ought to be happy over it. It ought to be enough.

Dyveke came in. She understood and snuggled close up to her.

“ Dear little Mother! Can you not see how blue the heavens are? Is it my fault? ”

Fru Thammers smiled and caressingly laid her head against hers.

“ Little girl, you are indeed my comfort. How cool and refreshing your hands are ! ”

“ We'll go out and see how blue the sky is. For it is really overpoweringly blue.”

And Dyveke insisted. She was such a wonderful mixture of tears and laughter. No one could withstand her. They two must go for a walk — a long, inconceivably beautiful walk.

CHAPTER XVII

AUGUST was far advanced. Some had already gone, many others had begun to think about going. Among the latter was Fru Thammers.

Everyone congratulated her for what the summer had done for Dyveke, who had come to look so much stronger. Yes, of course she was happy. But in her heart she longed to get away. Never had a summer seemed so painfully long.

When Dyveke came in with beaming face and asked: "Are not people kind here, are they not altogether angels?" she had to answer, "Yes." For they all were kind — even Samuel Stern. He was so kind as almost to drive one to desperation. Toward her and Dyveke he displayed the same kindly interest that he showed toward the Dean's wife, Baroness Crone, Fru Iversen, and all the others. They were all more than charmed with him, and Dyveke not the least.

But she no longer saw him alone.

She had begun to take her walks down across the meadows and toward the Falls. There she met the others, but never him.

All those chance circumstances which before

had brought them together happened no longer. Now they seemed to be only of the kind that kept them apart.

Several times she resolved that she would go to him and talk with him, alone; but some chance circumstance always prevented. Could he read it in her eye, when she was thinking of such a thing? For he was so clever and knew so well how to defend himself.

So she gave it up. They met every day in company with the others.

Dyveke was happy whenever they had an opportunity for a chat with him. She had an idea that it was good for her little mother, since she was, as it were, forced to be lively, and at times actually grew facetious.

Dyveke enjoyed this, since the little mother seemed the better for it. So she always tried to bring them together. She was concerned because her little mother had begun again to be troubled with sleepless nights.

One morning she came rushing in as was her wont.

“You must have dreamed something good last night! It is shining in your eyes. Do you know, morning dreams are true! Oh, you are still so beautifully sleepy! I will go —”

And she was off. Fru Thammers lay back again on her pillow and slept.

She had been awake the whole night and had sat by the window. She had seen him coming at last, just before dawn. She had hidden herself, for he came straight past her window. She saw him so plainly. He had been weeping.

Then she had sunk down on her knees and prayed that there might be some one found here on earth who could help him.

After that she had grown calm and had gone to bed.

One evening Dyveke came in as she always did to say good-night; not in her usual way however, but very quietly.

Fru Thammers turned. "Dear child, what have you done with your wings?"

Then she saw how white and trembling she was. She grew anxious.

"What is it?"

Dyveke threw her arms about her neck.

"I am just so terribly happy! I am engaged!"

Fru Thammers held her from her.

"You must not scare me," she said seriously.

"Little Mother, I will never do that. I am just telling you that I am engaged. Henry Crone and I love one another. Now he is going to the School of Forestry . . . for he thinks it would be a good thing for us to wait a while, he says. . . . Oh, how I wish — that I was past twenty!"

It came out so softly. Fru Thammers understood, but took no notice of it.

She smoothed her bright hair. "You will soon be that," she said quietly. "Time passes so quickly."

Fru Thammers did not sleep that night. The first thing in the morning she decided she would go and see Baroness Crone. But that was unnecessary, for shortly afterward the Baroness came to see her.

Henry Crone's mother was a small, delicate, sympathetic figure, with a pale, sweet face.

Fru Thammers had often wanted to talk intimately with her, but there had never been any occasion. Now it had come. And Fru Crone told how she had often had the same desire with regard to Fru Thammers, and now she was glad that it was she with whom she had to talk over this difficult matter.

Fru Crone was much moved and told, through her tears, how Henry had come to her the evening before and told her all about it.

At first she had not believed it. Then he had grown angry, and when she had reminded him how foolish it was for him to think of such a thing, he had left her and gone up to his room. She had heard him walking up and down the whole night. She had gone up to him just before she

came here, but he had locked his door and would not let her in. She did not know whether or not Fru Thammers had heard how weak he was. The physicians had given them little hope. He had been obliged to give up his books, and must take everything quietly and amuse himself — and above all there must be no mental excitement. So his uncle had decided to try the air up here. But here had come this mental excitement.

Fru Thammers quieted her. She had seen her son early that morning as he came back from a walk. But now she must tell her about Dyveke, for with her the situation was just as bad.

Again tears came to Fru Crone's eyes. She had indeed heard a little about it — but now she was so radiantly healthy — She could easily understand how Henry felt. She herself was in love with Dyveke.

And Henry had improved so much up here, it was almost incredible. She had written to his physician about it and it was difficult for him to believe it. But Henry said it was Dyveke who had driven death away from him. She had explained to him with much care that it wasn't always necessary to believe the physician.

Now he wants to go to the School of Forestry in the fall. Then he will take charge of an estate, become a real countryman and work out-of-doors the entire day. Dyveke has told him he

ought to do that and he has a great desire to do so.

Fru Crone rose. She would leave the matter in Fru Thammers' hands, but she had to tell her just how it was. She did not dare to go against Henry's wishes, for that would indeed be the surest way of losing him.

Fru Thammers smiled sorrowfully. "I see no other way than to let them be happy in one another and to trust that happiness will be good for them."

She quietly persuaded Fru Crone to be seated again, for she was still all of a tremble.

Then Fru Crone had to tell how it was when they saw one another for the first time. They had stood as if transfixed, staring at one another, like Dante and Beatrice. And how beautiful they both were — the North and the South met together — she so dazzlingly fair, and he — yes, was he not wonderful also, her Henry in his green Tyrolese costume, with his black eyes and curly black hair?

Suddenly Dyveke stood before them.

"Are you two sitting here talking it over and making it up that we are not to be engaged?" she interrupted violently.

"Is it —" She stopped and stared at them with big, frightened eyes.

"Why can we not be engaged? Is it —," she

whispered with voice half-choked, "Is it because — everything will soon be over for me? Can you not see how strong I am?"

She did not weep, but seemed to shrink together and grew deathly pale.

Fru Crone hurried over and took her in her arms. She pulled her down on her lap and whispered to her.

Fru Thammers followed them anxiously with her eyes.

Suddenly Dyveke regained her buoyancy. The blood again filled the veins beneath the transparent skin. Her entire face grew rosy red.

Then she came rushing over, and with arms around her neck, half laughing, half sobbing, she whispered: "I'll be right back . . . now I must go along with her and tell Henry he must open the door for his mother. . . . I have permission to do so . . . You may just believe that we will rattle the door! Oh, no one knows how strong I am!"

But that no one was to know anything about the affair was perhaps the most amusing thing of all to Dyveke.

Later in the day the two mothers had another consultation. The severe winter was not good for Dyveke, so it was decided that Fru Crone should take her down home with her. Henry would be

away at the School of Forestry and she would have need of just such a little daughter. She lived on her estate in South Tyrol, a beautiful old place, warm and full of sunshine and romance — just the thing for Dyveke.

So it was decided that Fru Thammers and Dyveke should leave the next day. They would go to Christiania for a week so that Dyveke could be fitted out for the journey. Then the Baroness and Henry would come and take her with them.

Dyveke was wild with joy and excitement. There was everything to be packed and all the good-bys to be said. Everyone thought it strange that she should be so glad to go so soon.

Fru Thammers grew nervous and strangely uneasy. She had not seen Samuel Stern the entire day. He had gone off on a trip and they did not know when he would be back.

At the supper table she inquired for him again. Yes, he had returned. But it was impossible to get a word with him alone. They were all around him together.

When she came over he looked up with an air of surprise and smiled.

“So you are going to leave us so soon? Have you stopped to think how stupid it will be for the rest of us?”

Fru Thammers also smiled.

“No, for Dyveke and I are not at all what we

ought to be. It will just be a pleasure to think that it is our absence that makes it stupid for you."

Dyveke nodded and laughed. She stood beside Henry, unusually silent and blushing. Radiance seemed to stream from her.

Then came the carriage.

Fru Thammers turned once more to Samuel Stern and reached out her hand.

"We have said good-by so often, it seems to me. This time it is certainly the last."

"That may be. I am not coming here any more. I have sold my hunting lodge. The little house, which I have bought, is to be torn down. No one shall live there again. Yes, the Dean's wife is right—it is a fancy. One has fancies. . . . Farewell, Fru Thammers."

He bowed reverently and remained standing, hat in hand.

At last Dyveke also got into the carriage and they started off.

They were all out on the lawn waving their handkerchiefs. The young people gave their yell with great feeling.

Dyveke stood upright with face turned toward them. The driver had to go slowly.

She nodded and beckoned with glance and smile, with hands and arms. She blew a kiss from the tips of her fingers, time and time again.

It was a sight to see her. She stood there like a young goddess of victory.

All the men, both young and old, broke into a cheer.

Then for a moment she grew shy and hid her face in her hands. But when the carriage turned again she blew them another kiss.

Each one thought that he had a share in this demonstration.

There was just one who took it all to himself, as he stood there with his dark eyes shining.

Fru Iversen was sorry for the young baron. He took it all so nicely. Of course he would soon be over it.

CHAPTER XVIII

THOSE days at Christiania had been very full. Not until now had Fru Thammers had time to reflect that she was again to be left alone.

It was evening. She had returned to the hotel after accompanying Dyveke to the railway station, where Fru Crone had received her like a mother.

She knew that she could rest easy so far as Dyveke was concerned, yet she felt that now she was lost to her.

Dyveke had wept, but had rejoiced more, for now she was going out to see the world. But she had made her little mother promise that when spring came she would come down and fetch her back. And Fru Crone had said that it was the only way she could get her back, because there was no one else to whom she would trust her.

Dyveke had already asked if they couldn't go to Forest Home again. Henry would be with them of course ——

She sat staring out into the heavy gray atmosphere.

Until spring! Perhaps they would both be dead by that time. It seemed to her that she would never see her again ——

She looked around. Here lay a book which had been forgotten . . . there a waist which she had just taken off, and which she did not care to take with her — and there she had forgotten a handkerchief.

She gathered them all up and held them close in her arms. There was something of Dyveke about them, a fresh, youthful odor.

Then she put them in her trunk and set about straightening things up. Now indeed she must begin to think what she should do with herself. But she avoided the question. There was so much to do getting things straightened up.

She seemed to hear a voice from the corner saying: "Of course you will go home to Bergen — what else could you do?"

But she evaded it — she would not answer.

She had to write a note to Dyveke which was to reach her at Copenhagen, and one which was to be waiting for her in her room when she arrived at Berlin. She had to go down and mail them. Then she went on for a little walk.

She went as far as the park where she sat down on a bench.

People were passing by. Some stopped for an instant and stared at her. Why did they do this?

—— Then it came over her, how alone she was — alone on earth!

Yes, of course she would find work. There

was no question about it. There was indeed so much to be done. She would go to Madame Harder. She would help her.

She looked about. Here she had played as a child. Close by was her childhood's home, but she did not want to see it. All was so unspeakably empty. Those who had loved her were gone.

She rose and went on.

There was the bench where she had sat once with Samuel Stern . . . that time when they were happy. She wondered if it were the same bench.

She took a side path so as not to go past it.

And over on that avenue she had walked that evening . . . when she was no longer happy . . . when she had just come back from him . . . when everything about her had gone to pieces. . . .

And the next morning early she had gone to Bergen . . . for she had been in great haste to get away. Yes, it was she who had done it all. She had brought her fate upon herself.

All that lay between that evening and the present time — it bore down upon her like an endless burden.

It was growing very cold and disagreeable. She would go back to the hotel. To-morrow she would pack, for she could not stay here. She had already been here two weeks.

As she turned a corner she was roused by the

sound of Fru Iversen's voice. She had met the wife of the wholesale-dealer Iversen.

“Well, isn't this interesting! Yes, we are all gone now. You know, Marit Hennerud is still up there with the live stock, fattening them up a little. And Merchant Stern is there. He is such a horrid hunter — yes, just think of those dear little animals, and then there is an English family, Lady Hammond, with her lord and three children, and their servants. They fish all together for days at a time — heavens, it is even worse ——”

Fru Thammers drew down her veil and passed on.

When she reached the hotel she found it was late.

She went to her room. It was so oppressively lonesome. She would hurry and get to bed. She would not think of what she was going to do. She would decide in the morning ——

—— Again there came the voice which said, of course she must go back to Bergen. Indeed that was her home. She would always find something there to keep herself busy.

She would not listen, for she had said that she would not think about it. She felt utterly exhausted. It was a good thing, for now she would go right to sleep.

Samuel Stern's mother came into her mind. Al-

though she had never seen her, she had always been as it were, in the background of her life.

How she wished now that she had seen her! If she had gone to her instead of flying off as she did — how different all might have been.

She was just on the point of dropping to sleep, but her thoughts would not let go. She wanted to ask her forgiveness, but she could not find her.

But afterward when she was asleep, Samuel's mother came. Her face was beaming and her voice gentle. She spoke only these words: "It is I who send you."

When Thora Thammers awoke in the morning she knew what she was going to do. An unusual sense of peace had come to her. She dressed very slowly. She felt that she must do everything slowly in order that she might better collect her thoughts.

She would remain here another day. There was no hurry. It would only become more certain with each day that now she would see him.

She went for a walk again in the park and went through all the old paths. She could do it now.

The sky was overcast, but the sun broke through occasionally. What a blessed thing it was to see the sun again! She began to look for the sunny spots so as to feel the sun's rays.

Suddenly she stopped. The thought struck her: what else had she been doing her entire life?

She supported herself against a tree.

A sudden calm took possession of her —— She would do so no longer. She had deserved nothing . . . and her day of life was long past. She would be thankful if there were still one ray to be found for her.

— She decided to wait a few days longer before leaving.

Marit Hennerud thought it exceedingly odd that Fru Thammers should come up to Forest Home again.

It was a bright autumn afternoon. There was no one to be seen except Sjur, whose face showed great delight as he caught sight of Fru Thammers.

The English family had gone up into the forest fishing and would not be back for a week. Merchant Stern was out hunting and was not expected very soon either. Marit Hennerud didn't know how she could entertain her.

Fru Thammers smiled. "Don't trouble yourself at all, but just let me take care of myself."

She was glad they were all away. It was just what she wanted.

The first day she went up on Flyen with Sjur. She had brought some books and pictures for him. Tears of joy came into Sjur's eyes. The little freckled face shone.

“ And isn't it wonderful that you'd think of me! And so wonderfully fine and nice they are, too! ”

Fru Thammers did not come down from Flyen that afternoon. She had to follow Sjur around with his pictures and make him acquainted with his new sources of wisdom.

Those warm, bright autumn days — how quietly and quickly they passed! She was not impatient. It did her good to wait. She felt that those days were making her over and giving her strength to bear what was yet to come.

One morning Turi came up with her breakfast, wearing a mysterious face.

— Yes, now the lady would no longer be alone. For the English people had come back at last, and Merchant Stern was with them.

Fru Thammers smiled and thanked her for the good news.

In front of one of her windows stood an old ash which had begun to shed its leaves. Through its branches she could look down on the little red cottage which belonged to Samuel Stern.

When Turi had gone she went over and opened the window. She saw him down on the little porch where he was taking his breakfast. Afterward he came out with his cigar and a book, and sat down on Fru Gyllenskjold's bench.

An hour later she went down.

He did not look surprised when she appeared. He knew that she was there.

"You have done well," he said, smiling, "in coming back again. Autumn is the best time of all."

She looked him frankly in the eye.

"Samuel Stern, it is not my fault that I have come here again. I could not do otherwise. It is on your account that I have come. I know that you are not happy. You must not go around here alone. You must have some companionship. And now I shall not allow myself to be put aside. I have a right to be here — your mother has given me permission."

He looked up, surprised at her new attitude. Then he laughed.

"You say that I am unhappy. . . . I am very glad if that is the case. I would not have it otherwise.

"But it will be too tiresome for you here. The English people fish as if their salvation depended upon it. When it rains you can have the pleasure of seeing My Lady go off in her great rubber boots . . . Also, you may occasionally have the exquisite pleasure of seeing me. . . . I should like to see myself, as I go wandering about here."

He looked up. His eyes were heavy.

"I think you had better go. I don't like anyone to see me as I am to-day."

She smiled sadly.

“ You should not be so utterly scornful of a few words with me. I am not as I once was. I have walked so long with my sorrow that it has led me in where everyone finds something for himself — something new which becomes his own. There I have learned to understand you better.”

“ Then perhaps you can tell me why one never can enjoy a blessing before he has lost it and no longer has the chance to enjoy it. . . . When one has it one does not enjoy it because he has it. I wonder if that is not the great curse on the human race, which of old was pronounced upon the earth, that one should never possess what he does possess.”

She wanted to say something, but could not. They both sat there in silence.

Then he turned hastily toward her.

“ You must not trouble yourself about me. After all, I am happy and light of heart, for now nothing more can happen to me. Now that the worst has happened, I don't care a rap about the rest.”

He rose, brushed the ashes from his cigar, then laid it down again.

“ Yes, I am quite happy and light-hearted, now that there is nothing more for which I long. There is certainly no pleasure in that deep and painful longing which is always mingled with re-

gret that one never accomplishes what one wants to. When all that is gone, one is no longer conscious of ——”

Thora Thammers rose also.

“ I wish you would go for a walk with me.”

“ Why? So that you can comfort me? I have just confessed to you that I do not need it. I have such a strangely post-festive nature. There is always so much that I forget to say. Where do you wish to go? ”

He went inside and then came back again.

“ I am not grieving, for I do not think it is true. It annoys me when people come and talk about it. Where do you wish to go? ”

“ Can we not go to the Falls? There is no one there now —

“ I have always enjoyed looking at the Falls,” she continued — for it seemed best to talk about something else. “ There is a certain satisfaction in watching the water plunge down and then away, for it seems to take with it something of that which overwhelms and crushes one.”

“ Humph, no! We will not go to the Falls. All that which goes and goes and does not come again, I cannot endure it. I want things to return. I want my mother to come back again as she always did before, when she had been away anywhere — Well, I suppose we'd better go somewhere.”

He took up his hat. "But if you like the Falls, in Heaven's name let us go to the Falls."

They started down the slope. He began to talk about indifferent matters — made fun of the English people, every now and then however, unexpectedly interrupting himself with the thoughts that filled his mind.

He stopped.

"Now she has begun to come back to me. When I am wandering about at night, if I am in the right mood, then some one comes and walks by my side. Before this I used to imagine it was another who came and greeted me so graciously and said: 'Now I am coming back to you again.' But now, since my mother left me, it is she who comes. When all is quiet and no human being is near, then she comes and calls me with her loving voice, that unforgettable voice. And she comes and walks silently by my side."

He turned toward her.

"I know what you are thinking. Yes, your face expresses just what you would say: 'But your mother was old, so you must have expected this.' Fröken Marit said something like that the other day. She thought she was saying something comforting. 'Yes,' I answered, 'you are quite right. It was of course just what I had been expecting.'"

His tone wounded her. They went on down the slope.

She remained silent. She thought it was better for him to go on and express his feelings without any words from her.

“ I cannot bear the emptiness of her rooms there at home — and mine are the same way — although she was seldom in them. It has seemed to me that she was away on a journey. But now I can endure it no longer, now she certainly must come home again —— For you see, it was just as certain as that day follows night, that whenever I came home, there I would find Mother sitting in her chair. I could go to her and renew my strength.

“ I keep on saying: ‘ My mother thinks this,’ and ‘ Mother always says that.’ I pretend that she still lives. I cannot have it otherwise. . . .

“ In the past it often happened that I did things that I knew she did not like. Now that she is no longer here, I have a burning desire to do everything as I think she would have me do it.”

He turned sharply toward her. “ What do you think about all this ?

“ And I am stricken with remorse that I was not with her at the time. . . . For the thought that she would not have come had it been I who lay there, is inconceivable.

“ I was abroad at the time. I thought: ‘ Of

course Mother will soon be all right again.' . . . Then came a few days when I deliberately put my mind on other matters — for I could not bear to think of Mother being ill. It is dreadful that one should be so ——

“ I have really been quite beside myself. . . . I can remember wondering how it could be possible for Mother to die. She must of course die some time — but how it could come about I could not comprehend, for she was stronger than anyone I knew. That which the rest of us were afraid of and pushed from us, she was able to endure. We did not know that it was because she had such boundless courage and will to bear all burdens. I understood her so poorly. Not until she was gone did I realize how tired she must have been, after this long life of bearing the burdens of others.

“ I was so accustomed, when things were at their worst, to go to Mother. She gave me strength to live again. I always found her there. I believe I must have thought that when death itself should sometime come to me, she would be there to ward off the blow ——

“ I am consumed with remorse that I should have been so close to her, and yet I did not see that she was tired. . . . I did not understand that her evening had come . . . and that she needed rest.”

Thora Thammers turned toward him.

"What are you looking for?" she asked softly.

"Oh, just for some flowers that used to grow here, but there are none now."

"It is not the season for them," she said gently.

"No, it certainly is not — the leaves are falling."

As they walked they both watched the leaves which were falling down about them.

"Never again! Past and gone! Those words seem to inclose something that is eternally sealed, forever incomprehensible to the human heart. And *sorrow* and *death* — one has no conception what they are. One may indeed think he knows, but he never does until they come to him —"

"It is well, I think, that there is no one to grieve for me . . . no one left who belongs to me. Yes, when one becomes acquainted with sorrow and learns how it rises with the sun fresh and new every morning, and does not diminish with the day . . . when one knows the grip it takes on one's nerves, then it is well, if one can save anyone else from —"

He bent down.

"See, I have found one anyway . . . It is Mother's favorite flower. It blossoms anew

among the falling leaves, like these last days of sunshine which come as unexpected gifts."

She smiled at him. "Be sure you accept them."

"Just now I recall a sunny day, but it was in early summer — one of my first recollections — my grandmother's funeral. A bell was tolling and there were quantities of white lilies. The deep notes of the bell and the heavy odor of the flowers produced a strange impression upon me.

"I did not understand it. I had never seen death before and I knew nothing about it. But the fragrance, the flowers, the heavy tones of the bell, and all the solemn, black-robed people filled me with vague apprehension.

"They gave me cake to eat. It was macaroons, and I ate with the feeling that there was something weirdly mysterious surrounding me.

"Later, of course, I forgot it, got away from it. Yet I never afterward thought of death except as of something far removed from myself — an empty spectacle which signified nothing.

"I dreamed about Mother last night. I thought I was a little child again, and I was running about calling for her. She heard me and came, and said so softly: 'Can you not let me rest now, my child, my little silken lamb?' — she called me that when I was small. And I answered as I usually did when I was little: 'Yes,

I know that I am your silken lamb, but you are also my little lamb.'

"And I held her fast in my arms. I would not let her go again. She said to me: 'You see, now I shall come to you almost every night. We were together so little before, you remember. It was very hard for me to send you out into the world so early, but now I can come to you. Whenever you are in trouble you may know that I will come'—— It is pleasant to delude oneself with such dreams. . . . See that dragonfly sitting there in the sunshine. It does not move — there is but the slightest quiver to its wings. It is at peace. One ought to learn from it how to make better use of the sunshine."

"One ought to indeed." She looked at her watch. "It is later than I thought. We must turn back. But see, how beautiful it is yonder! There above the heather!"

He laughed. "Your heart surely does not know what beauty is, for that is nothing but a mirage."

"Is it?" She looked as though she did not want to believe it. She sighed softly and stood there silently with bowed head.

"But we must go. Lady Hammond will be sitting at the chess-board waiting for you," she added gayly. "She is bored with her lord and you promised her yesterday to be there."

“You are right. One has duties. And you! You go about grieving for your husband and longing for your little children, and now you have begun to look after those who are lost. You must not overdo.”

His voice had again taken on that strangely distant tone. She looked quickly up at him.

In silence they walked homeward.

She was thinking as she walked, of what he had said. How his mother must have loved him — such a deep impression she had made upon his soul!

Never as now had she had such a humiliating sense of the immeasurable distance between such a mother's silent, self-forgetful love, and that which she once had felt for him.

CHAPTER XIX

SEVERAL days had passed.

Lady Hammond was in raptures over her fellow guests. Now it was really quite pleasant here. There was just one thing at fault, and that was that neither the Norwegian lady nor the Norwegian lord could be persuaded to go fishing with them.

One afternoon the whole family went off down the river. The weather was good again and Thora Thammers went up on Flyen. She wandered about for a time, then it occurred to her that she would go over to the place where Samuel Stern had sat with his mother.

As she came around to the huge bowlder that lay just opposite, she saw him there. His face was brighter than was usual these days when he sat alone.

She turned to go away, but he smiled at her.

“Won't you come over and sit here for awhile? I have scarcely seen you for a long time.”

So she went on.

They began to talk of the everyday happenings up there.

He told about the English people, and about

Marit Hennerud, who would not allow herself to be engaged. One of the unhappy swains who had been waiting for her had recently been up there. He was one of the most desirable matches in the district, but she would not even shake hands with him, so his prospects were not of the brightest.

Thora Thammers grew quite gay. "No, she never believes it is the right one who has come. The family is quite vexed about it."

But suddenly there was nothing more to talk about.

The heather looked so fresh after the rain, which also had brought out the pungent odor of the dwarf birch. Mingled with this was the sweet, wild fragrance of the myrica. The air was soft and mild, and above were the vast slopes wrapped in a bluish haze.

They both sat there looking up at the white mountain.

Then he turned around toward her.

"I dreamed so much last night."

"Tell me about it," she said softly.

"I thought I had just gotten home. I sat beside Mother's bed and read to her about Moses and the Promised Land. Then the Lord himself came and said to her: 'See, now I will give you the land. It is yours. I will surround you with splendor and you shall rule over all that your soul

desires.' . . . And I thought she smiled at me. I felt her failing glance.

"I slept on, heavily. I was going about searching for something. I could not understand what had become of her. An angel came and I said: 'Tell me, you who soar on high, did you see my mother? Tell me if you saw her up there in that land of hers, surrounded by all her splendor. You surely can lighten this bitterness which fills me at the thought that she no longer lives, that I shall never see her again.'

"The angel took me by the hand, and then I found her. She was sitting in her chair and was bright and happy. We were both so happy. For it was such a comfort to have an opportunity at last to tell her how much I loved her.

"I talked plainly with her: 'You dear old Mother, how fortunate that I have found you at last. Tell me, did you know how I went about seeking for you? You did not know how desolate and cold it was here, and how I suffered when you were away. Can you feel how wet my brow is? Now I will rest here with you.'

"I took both her hands: 'You wonderful Mother, I knew indeed that you would come again. There is so much for you to do. You must care for us all. You must love us as no one can but you. It is so pleasant when you come in this way, as you must often do.' And I asked her

advice. When she comes, I always ask about so many things ——

“Then she gazed so mildly upon me: ‘But now I must go, my child. You know indeed that life is over for me.’ But I held her fast. ‘Mother, you must not go! See, how I wander about here, unable to sleep for painful thoughts. In the past, whenever I came you were waiting for me. I will bring an easier chair for you. I will fetch the best that is to be found. Mother, you do not know how it tortures me, the thought that I never did anything for you’ ——

“Then I saw that she had vanished. Far in through the gloom she had withdrawn, while I was searching for a more comfortable chair. . . . Such a wonderful night it was!”

Thora Thammers sat half turned away.

“There is more,” she said quietly. “You must tell it all.”

He did not hear what she said. He sat with his head bowed in his hands.

“I thought that I awoke then, and got up. It was not yet light. I came up here. Then I saw her in the distance. ‘Mother,’ I said, ‘why are you so far away? Come over here and talk with me awhile. You do not know how unhappy I am because I was not with you when you were ill. I am so consumed with remorse that I cannot lie in my bed at night.’ ‘Yes,’ said Mother, ‘I

know, but you must not think of that any longer. Now you must promise me that you will not think about it.' Then she came and walked by my side. I knelt down before her: 'Now at last I must tell you something. Yes, there are three things I have forgotten to say to you. You said the pain would soon be over when once we had lost you. Now you can see that it is not so. You also said that time heals all wounds — neither is that in the least bit true. Never again can I forget, such torture it is, that I saw you that last time, and merely took your hand hurriedly, and met your gaze without knowing that we should not see one another the next day — nor ever again!'

“ ‘Yes, but, my child,’ she said, ‘you must not think about that’——

——“Then I thought that I did her some little service, and she thanked me for it. She was always so grateful for the least favor. It tortured me, because I had always done so little for her; and I had never had a chance to say how I regretted it. But here at last was the opportunity: ‘Mother, you must never thank me. It hurts me when you do so. It is like a stone on my breast. For it is I who should thank you eternally — it is never you. You know I have never done anything for you, have never thanked you once for all that you have done for me.’ I was glad that at last I had a chance to tell her this.——

“Is it not tiresome for you sitting here listening to all this?”

She did not answer, but merely looked at him.

As he continued to sit there in silence, she asked finally: “Is there nothing more?”

“I thought that again all grew dark and heavy. I went everywhere inquiring for Mother. There was some one who said that she had gone away. I thought that was so ridiculous. Finally she came. ‘Dear Mother, how is it that I have not seen you for so long? It is fortunate that you have come, for there are a thousand things that I must say to you. But why do you come so silently? How are you? Are you sleeping any better now? Do you remember, you said that last night: “It is so hard that I cannot sleep, either day or night.” Is it better now, since the long, silent night has come? Is it true, Mother, the saying: “Deep is the sleep of death, soft is its pillow of dust”?’— Mother, how glad I am to hear your voice. It is so desolate when you are not here — so empty when I do not know that you will soon come again’— Then I thought that I stood beside her grave, and she followed me toward home. ‘You must not take it to heart,’ she said. ‘You must not fret about it. Do you not feel that I am with you?’

“Then my heart trembled within me. ‘Yes, but you must never leave me again.’

“ But when we came to the door of the old home I grew anxious, for I saw she had wings. ‘ You will surely go in, Mother.’ Then she smiled quietly. ‘ Dear child, do you not know that I have won through?’ And she turned toward me and breathed peace upon me ——

“ I tried to reach her with my arms — then I awoke —— Now since she is gone, I have begun to believe that there must be a place up there —

“ I wanted so much to have her closer to me, so that I could make her old age more comfortable than I had done before in my thoughtlessness. And she had promised that this summer she would come —— How much she thought of me even in death! She wanted to spare me — no one must tell me how it was. A mother’s love — that is the only thing of which nothing, not even our own baseness, can deprive us.” ——

“ Shall we go home now and play chess with My Lady? ”

“ You must not do that. You ought rather to go home and rest. You are tired.”

“ Mother always said: ‘ One has no right to be tired.’ She was never tired. It was in that way she deceived us, who were short-sighted and weak-hearted to such a degree that we believed that she was divine and never could wear out.

Yes, she deceived me to that extent, and in the unspeakable simplicity of my heart I came at last to believe that Mother was immortal. Incredible as it may seem, when other old people died I thought it was all right; but with Mother death had nothing to do, he must not come near her.

“Can you remember? No, you never saw her after all. She loved military music when it was out in the open, under the great blue heavens. It seemed to loosen bound forces within her, and how her eyes would shine. Deep in her soul was a longing for flight, far up through the vast spaces of heaven. But she was bound, so she folded her wings together. She possessed great power, and that silent, deep courage which would not allow itself to be troubled. She bowed beneath her burdens and endured them. She was invincible — and thought everything should be borne and carried on to victory. For that reason Napoleon was her hero.

“As I grew up and came to my understanding I acquired great reverence for this view. All that I knew of suffering, each daily sorrow or grief, became as nothing in the presence of those quiet, courageous eyes, those blessed blue eyes which knew so much —

—— Her beautiful, clear voice meant so much to us children. It brought such a sense of se-

curity with it. And when she sang to us or read to us — it was always a time of rejoicing. Her voice never grew old, as other people's do. Through all the years it kept its soft, sweet note ——

“It is very wicked of me that I cannot allow her to rest. Death is indeed a kingly reward. It is the crown of life. I surely ought not to grudge her that.”

Thora Thammers was moved and looked at him compassionately. “Yes, yes,” she whispered.

“It is hard for me. But that which troubles me more in the daytime than in my dreams, is the fact that I was not with her when she died — that it was not I who wiped the sweat from her brow, lifted her up in bed and cared for her. She herself thought that it was best for me not to see how she suffered. But it has brought its own punishment. Now I see it all continually. I endure her suffering with her —— I have always been so miserably weak. In certain ways I am abnormally sensitive. So I have been accustomed to set my teeth together and throw all such things from me. But not now — now I let them come.”

A pained expression came into his face. He rose, started off — then came back and sat down again.

“There is something else also that has begun to trouble me —”

Thora Thammers rose and laid her hand on his arm.

“Now we must go home. Your mother said that you must think of this no more. You know very well she would never want you to go on dwelling upon all this, although I think it is better for you that you have told me about it. I believe it will be easier for you to rise above it.”

He looked up, surprised at her confident tone.

He rose and they went down the slope.

“I am a wretch, do you not think so? Of course it will become easier. It will be easier, you know, next week when I take up my correspondence, and then when I get down to the office again.”

At the foot of the hill they saw Lady Hammond coming. His face changed.

“See how confident and alert she is. She is utterly amazed at the thought that there is any human being who is not content. The only trouble is that people do bore one another — that she admits.”

“And the Lord? Do you know, he wants to write a book about Norway.”

“And so he wants to write! Perhaps that would be better, for everything he says is so absurd.”

Then up came Lady Hammond, waving her hand and beaming with enthusiasm. She had waited for him at the chess-board, and could talk of nothing but of how she would avenge herself.

CHAPTER XX

SOME more guests had arrived. It was Marit Hennerud's third season.

They were hunters and fishermen. Also from the district down below came some of Marit's friends who were now going to have a little holiday themselves.

Among them were a couple of stout young guardsmen whom Thora Thammers enjoyed. Simple and natural in character, and with honest, open mind, they were as refreshing and invigorating as the air itself was up there.

Thora Thammers felt stronger than she had felt for many years. It seemed that now, for the first time, she could *rest* — and *work*. Madame Harder had once said that if one wanted to get things straightened out, one must begin with oneself. Almost unconsciously she had come to this point of view. She had not thought that she agreed with it; but she noticed that after she had begun work on her inner self, her vision had grown clearer and her bitterness had gradually disappeared.

She almost laughed, for now for the first time one day she discovered that Sjur had scarcely any

clothes. She had no time now for long walks, but began to knit stockings and make shirts. There was healing in this also, she discovered.

The days passed. She saw very little of Samuel Stern. He was occupied with business matters, and also went off on hunting excursions, so that at times several days passed without seeing him. She no longer sought him either, except when she thought it was bad for him to be alone. She could tell that by looking at his face.

One day as she sat outside with her work he came over to see her.

"How are you these days? I see so little of you. You seem to be devoting yourself to all kinds of good work."

She looked up, smiling.

"And you to the task of idleness. You have sat altogether too long on your veranda doing nothing. See, here is a book that I thought I should take out with me. You may begin it with me. You may read it to me."

He looked at her in surprise, but took the book and walked along with her.

Gradually he recovered from his surprise, for it had come about that he always did whatever she said. Very quietly, and unconsciously to both, she had acquired a power over him which she never before had possessed.

It seemed to her that there was less and less

of Omar Pasha about him, and that each day there was more resemblance to the Samuel Stern she once had known.

They had gotten into the habit, when he was at home, of taking daily walks together. At times Lady Hammond or some of the others accompanied them. The first time that this occurred it struck her as odd that any one else should be with them; but as she reflected upon it, it seemed a perfectly natural thing. Nevertheless, when they were alone they talked more freely with one another.

She talked about her children and about Dyveke; and whenever a letter came from the latter she always read it to him. It cheered him up. The fresh young enthusiasm for everything which filled the letters came to them like the jubilant notes of a lark. And if they saw the mail coming, he was just as eager as she to get the letters.

When they were alone he had begun to tell her about his business affairs — and he always had something to say about his mother, as if it were a comfort merely to mention her name. Even if he did not speak of her she could tell by his tone and his glance when she was in his thoughts.

She seemed always near them when they were alone.

Thora Thammers was glad of this. In this

way she was a help to him. The fact that he wanted to talk with her about his mother seemed to her an undeserved happiness.

But with a woman's intuition she perceived that all thought of their past had been effaced from his mind. Such complete forgetfulness — how merciful!

She was glad of it, too, for there was justice in it; and she reveled in the thought. She must take care not to disturb this condition of affairs.

But then he must have forgiven her entirely. She clung to that thought.

Lady Hammond, as well as others, also noticed that Lord Stern, as she called him, had become less irritable and more sociable.

He enraptured her one day by expressing a desire to go with them on a fishing excursion. She ascribed it to the chess. She had long ago discovered that there was a refining influence about chess but unfortunately she had never been able to get her own lord to try it.

The fishing trip proved to be longer than they had expected, and even more romantic than Lady Hammond had imagined.

They got lost in the woods, had to stay at the mountain dairies, and spent two nights in deserted cabins.

Lady Hammond was more than enthusiastic, while the Lord took notes for his book. Samuel

Stern grew tired of it all and wished himself home again.

When they finally returned, wet and loaded down with booty, they had been away almost a week.

Lord Stern had been cross, Lady Hammond confessed.

Marit Hennerud would not believe this. She looked after him as if she had been his mother; and the fire on the hearth had never burned more cheerily.

At last Fru Thammers came down and welcomed their return. Yes, she had heard that they were back, but had to finish some work before coming down.

They dined on a remarkable fish, then gathered around the hearth where they rested and warmed themselves, while Lady Hammond recounted all their amazing adventures in her wonderful Norwegian English.

Samuel Stern sat silent, leaning toward the fire, his head resting on his hand.

Lady Hammond was not so much engrossed in her story but that she noticed how the flame lighted up the handsome head with its curly hair. Her own lord was so bald.

Samuel Stern sat looking at Thora Thammers in a surprised sort of way. It seemed as if he did not really recognize her, or as if, after this ab-

sence, he for the first time saw that she had changed.

Finally he spoke to her about it.

She turned toward him.

“Who is it who says: ‘Sorrow has its own reward. It never leaves us where it found us’? I hope it is true. I needed to change.”

Then she added more softly: “I think I am learning a little each day — from your mother.”

As she turned away again there was a gleam of tears in her eyes.

The clear, bright days went peacefully by, while the trees upon the lawn put on their yellow autumn dress. These were the last, late days of summer, that sometimes come toward the end of September. This year there were many of them.

Lady Hammond would not go away while it was so beautiful, and Marit Hennerud had been obliged to promise her to stay a while longer. She had already rented one of the cottages for the next summer and also wanted Fru Thammers to promise to come up again.

But Fru Thammers had shaken her head with a firm little smile.

On the whole it was just as well not to have too much of Lady Hammond at one time. Therefore she seized the first opportunity to get away. It seemed to her almost a crime to sit

inside and gossip during such wonderful weather as they had been having the last few days.

She went up on Flyen, up where Samuel Stern had sat with his mother.

She often went there, because the view was wonderful now in the clear autumn air, and because this place with its memories was a part of the silent life of her thoughts.

She sat down on a stone in the full flood of sunshine. The beams played about her in gentle familiarity, bringing with them some of the stored up sweetness of summer.

She enjoyed the huge, restful mountains. She felt that they had given her something of their quiet strength and a bit of their tranquillity.

—— For tranquil she should be. *Ever more tranquil!* That should be her motto.

—— The trees, with minds at rest, leaned toward her over the long slopes. They were her friends and she must thank them, for they also had helped her.

A little dwarf birch glowed by her side, and straight above stood some golden aspens, quivering in the soft breeze. Their leaves were dropping one by one, unceasingly, sailing softly down about her with a faint trembling sound.

For an instant a breath of wind brought the sound of the Falls as plainly as though they were close by. She had not thought they could be

heard up here. Someway they did not fit in. Here everything was, as it were, ended. She also was approaching the end — It was better to hear the river. It rushed along with imperious will, but it was not stupid. What it talked about in its wild mood in the spring it had forgotten —

——“River, what do you say as you hasten by? Shall all become tranquil and peaceful in the end?”

The answer came murmuring back: “Have no fear. Man shall at last attain his goal.”

“Yes, of course!” she answered in her thoughts. “Yes, we know that is true.”

Nevertheless, she continued to sit there listening. She thought it said “Yes, yes,” so reassuringly, the whole way down the silent, listening mountain-side, “Yes! Yes!” with such a heavy, confident murmur.

CHAPTER XXI

SHE did not know what time it was. She thought it must be late and was just on the point of starting down, when she saw Samuel Stern coming up the slope directly toward her.

It was seldom now that they met on Flyen. So she sat still.

He came up and sat down in his usual place.

"Well! How are you? I notice that you make use of the chess-board and me as a means of escape."

She assented smilingly.

"How long are you going to stay up here?"

"Our Lady has beguiled me into staying a while longer, so long as the weather is pleasant."

"That is sensible. You are getting to look so much better. Then you have so much to do."

"You mean my reading with Sjur. . . Yes, that also is a reason for staying a little while longer. I believe that he will be benefited by it."

"He looks so fine these days, as though he were ready to stand at the altar. Yes, we have much to thank you for, Sjur and I; but I am jealous of him. He may keep the shirts and stockings, but why have you not read to me also?"

“You are facetious to-day.”

“Not at all! I find that I am obliged to leave this evening — now, before supper. I have already paid my respects and said good-by down below, and left a farewell message for you. So it is indeed fortunate that I have found you.”

She smiled somewhat heavily. “It must be quite accidental since you left your good-by below.”

“As you please! It is quite a fortunate accident for me, however. I want to thank you for what you have done for — Sjur and me.”

“You are very thoughtful,” she said briefly.

“I have not always been so. But to speak seriously, it is pleasant that we have met — is it not?”

She did not answer. It hurt her that his coming to say good-by should be purely an accident. She felt that she had not deserved this; but she suppressed her feeling, and when she turned toward him she was calm as usual.

“Yes, it is indeed. I am glad to see you before you go — thankful to be allowed to say good-by. But now permit me to say a few words to you. There is something I would like to know, for there must no longer be any bitterness between us.”

She had grown somewhat paler than usual, but

sat quietly with hands folded on her knee. She did not look at him.

With a hasty glance he turned around facing her. He made a movement as if to go, but continued to sit there dumbly staring at her.

She waited a moment to gain better control over herself. Then she continued:

“There is something else that I have wanted to say. Now I think I can do so, for we are really friends, are we not?”

He nodded and she continued, somewhat uncertainly.

“One day when you were talking about your mother, and what a great happiness it was to possess the love of a human being, you said that one always had a right to know if one were loved, that it was good for one to know it — there was strength in the knowledge — and no one had a right to withhold it. You were filled with remorse that you never had told your mother in so many words.

“Then I thought: ‘That is true. It is indeed.’ That is why I speak now. Always, while I believed that I loved Arvid — and afterward — it was always you alone whom I loved — always you whom I kept in my heart and in my dreams. I do not give this as an excuse for myself, and it may indeed sound strange; but perhaps it may lessen the bitterness somewhat.

“ I can say this now, now that all else has been forgotten. But now you must tell me that you have forgiven me, wholly and completely.”

He raised his hands as if to shield himself.

She continued: “ And you can see that I am no longer unhappy. I have learned much. I have reached a point where I never was before. . . . Yes, I shall be happy, merely to hear you say that you have forgiven me.”

He shook his head.

“ It is you who must forgive. You want to be my friend, but I don't care for your friendship. For now I have come to love you again, but in a very different way. Be quiet, you need not be frightened — I will never annoy you again. But you also must know that through all the long years, it often happened that I would raise my head and look toward the door, thinking that you would some time come — or I would turn and look, hoping to find you waiting somewhere to surprise me. There was a time when I wanted to hate you. But that feeling is long since gone, and I am glad that now I love you so purely that I do not say: Stay, for the day is declining. Stay, that there may be some brightness to lighten the gloom. I say: Go! You must leave me, and I shall pray that all good may come to you.

“ To have seen such a feeling as this within my heart for you, grow large and beautiful until it

has reached the point where the thought is no longer for self, but wholly for the other, is to anticipate the great mystery which inclines soul to soul. It gives one an idea that there is within one something worthy of reverence, something of the power of God which may be looked upon as a refining fire. When the Lord appeared on Mount Sinai, you know, the people had to cleanse their garments, and a wall was set round about so that no one should come too near the holy place and be struck down. And the people trembled and stood far off. Many of us poor mortals have been struck down — because we have profaned the holy place.”

His voice had grown so mild that it was like a flood of tenderness streaming toward her.

“But you must tell me, dear one, where you will be so that I may know how you live and breathe. You do not know what a comfort it is to me just to know that you exist. . . . But why are you so pale? Are we not at peace now? May your feet walk in ways of pleasantness.”

She had sat with bowed head. Now she looked up with a pained expression, and her voice faltered.

“My feet found their way up here. . . . I thought — if I could be of some service to you, that would be the best thing for me — It is

not I who am going — it is you. Yet it is true that time heals all wounds. There is still happiness in store for you. And when your rooms are no longer empty, when a happy young life is joined with yours, then will it be well with me. Then shall I know that I am forgiven.”

There was silence.

Then he rose and stretched out his hands toward her.

“I want you to tell me, at any rate, if you can believe me this time. Do you not yet believe me? I am determined that you shall!”

He grew vehement.

She closed her eyes and sank back against a boulder.

“I do indeed believe you. You have sat here and told me that you have forgotten everything, and I believe you. I have, in fact, seen it myself this entire summer . . . have seen it and felt it with heart and soul, and with all my being — so I truly do believe you.”

She added softly: “So you must forgive me for all I said that time. I no longer think that way now. I only think, how glad I should be if you could be happy.”

Her nerves began to quiver. She tried in vain to control herself.

He sat down opposite her.

“Now you must tell me in strictest truth whether you did not believe me that time also, when you said you never could believe me again . . . and if it were true that you had forgotten me.”

She grew deathly pale.

“It was not true. But I was afraid of myself. It was I myself whom I could not trust. So I had to save myself, from myself.”

He rose and walked away. She looked anxiously after him.

He came back again, stooped and looked into her quivering face.

“May I take Wolf’s place? He is not here.”

He took Wolf’s place and laid his head on her knee.

Might he not? He asked again humbly, longingly.

She could not answer him. The wave of joy which swelled within her had broken softly into tears.

He said nothing more.

Then she bent forward. She must see his face.

He was weeping.

She pressed her cheek against his hair and closed her eyes. A flood of happiness broke over her — a silent ecstasy.

Was it true? Or was it another dream? ——

"So you would give me a young wife," he murmured.

She laughed. Then her voice took on a more serious note.

"Because you had ceased to think of me. I saw that I had no place in your sight or in your mind."

"I knew no better than that you had turned from me forever. That time you said that you never could believe me, it was then you were lost to me completely. It was like death."

"Forgive me!" She crept into his arms.

"And now I have come," he whispered, "and beg for warmth and shelter — will you give them to me?"

"No, it is I who come begging that I may be let in — in where your mother is. I will sit on a stool at her feet and learn of her. It is my great loss that I did not come before."

"Do you know," she murmured a moment later, "if I had not been so certain that you had forgotten me, I never could have said what I did."

"Then how thankful I should be for my self-restraint. But let us never think of that again. I cannot yet comprehend how all this has come about."

Suddenly her face changed and she drew back from him.

"Yes, but after all it was merely an accident.

“And what of that? We should have great reverence for what we call accidents. It is they that shape our destinies —— You surely are not thinking of leaving me again?”

He drew her quickly to him.

“You do not know what a blessed thing it is for such a poor, frozen mortal — to get home.”

But she could not free herself from the thought.

“Otherwise you would have gone away. You intended to leave me?”

He looked at her in mild reproach.

“I knew no better, dear. Remember, it was you yourself who had closed the door on hope. Your rôle of pitying angel was an entirely different matter. As to that, it might have happened that I should have come again to see if you were here.”

“But I really feel that you ought to have a young wife, a fresh, happy ——”

He laid his hand on her mouth. She took it away and kissed it.

“Yes, for you see how old I have grown, so old that my hair ought to be quite white.”

“Dear child, you do not yet know what it is to love. If you were so old that you had but one day more to live, I should rejoice that I had won you, so that we might have that day together.

And if we had no more than this hour here I would not exchange it for a long existence with a young wife."

He laughed, then took both her hands and kissed them.

"I suspect that you would like to be seventeen again, as you were that other time. Fortunately you cannot be. Let me confide in you: the happiness I have won to-day I would not change for the bliss of youth, or for anything of such a trivial nature. Do you not feel how much greater our happiness is to-day than it was then? It is like costly wine which has grown all the richer for having been stored away. It is as genuine as the pure, red gold.

"You say it is late. It is never too late for a blessing to come to one. At whatever time of life it comes, that is the best. . . . But tell me, what is the matter?"

For her eyes had grown so heavy. A shadow crept over her face, a hint of all she had suffered, of all the tears she had shed.

"What is it?" he asked quickly.

"I am filled with remorse. Have you forgiven me for letting life slip away from us in this way?"

He folded her quietly in his arms. "Have you forgiven me? For many years I have won-

dered how I could have done what I did at that time. . . . Yet life has not slipped away — it is here when you smile. When I hold you in my arms, life is here.”

She looked at him so fearfully, as though she did not dare yield to her happiness.

“Oh, Samuel, I wish you could see things as they are.”

He gazed far into the depths of her eyes.

“Tell me that you are content here with me,” he begged. “Tell me that. For you see, it has all come back. Our youth is here again. Is it not true that I have waited for you? Why were you so long? — And the little brook among the pines, do you remember how it rippled and sang? . . . The old pines still whisper, and the little brook ripples and murmurs. Do you remember?”

“Yes, how we wandered along, wishing that time would stand still.”

“Now all that has come back to us again.”

“Yes,” she whispered, but the tears stood in her eyes. She turned away so that he should not see them.

Could it be true that at last they two had come together? Could it be that he sat there so close to her, and that they never more should be separated? How she thrilled with happiness merely to hear his voice, his soft breathing! And she

saw once more his smile with the mild expression about the mouth.

“Thora, do you know what your name is like? It is deep blue in color, and mysterious, like the mountain up there. Then it is full of hidden sunshine — like yourself.”

He bent over her.

“Thora, what are you thinking about?”

“I am not thinking. My thoughts are at rest.”

“That is because it is summer here . . . and you are here. And you are, after all, only seventeen. Once more I thank God for you.”

“Ah, but Samuel, you can no longer see.”

“Indeed, I see that you have come back to me again, and each day shall I acknowledge this blessing on bended knee. You do not know how often I have longed to touch your hand. Why do you close your eyes?”

“Because it is all so dazzling. Like a flood of light it comes over me that I am here with you. If only you are happy, then all will be well. It is so cozy and warm with you. It is I who have been frozen, I who have at last come home. Tell me once more that you love me, Samuel; once more. I am so hungry to hear it, to know that it is true.”——

Silence fell upon them. All about was quiet.

There was nothing to be heard but the stroke of an oar from a solitary boat on the water below. It was like a vast cathedral filled with the peace of consecration.

She sat with a smile on her lips. A joy arose within her — a deep and palpitating joy.

To them it seemed so good merely to sit there together, knowing that henceforth they never again should part. But occasionally he felt constrained to say something. Then there was silence again. Then it was she who must say something to him, just so she would know that it was not a dream.

As she had sat there her face had changed. The heavy lines had faded away, and bathed in light another face appeared — a happy face.

“Samuel, there is just one thing I must ask you again. Do you really love me still? It seems so wonderful to me that I must ask you once more.”

He did not answer her question. He only made some foolish remark which had no meaning in it, but which touched her deeply.

“Samuel, you forget entirely the years that have passed.”

“How different my name sounds as it comes from your lips! It is like a new name, soft and mild, with depths of feeling, and it seems to bring a blessing with it. Say it again. You never said

it that way in the past. Your voice was not capable of it before."——

"The white dress you had on that time you left me, what have you done with it? You must wear just such a dress when you come to me now, so that I may know you have really come again."

"But, Samuel, everyone will laugh at me."

"What difference will it make with my happiness if people do laugh? Can you tell me?"

She could not.

"But there is one thing that I have completely forgotten to ask you. Can you love *me*? Can you hold me in your heart forever? Can you keep in mind our enchanted life here on Flyen? For that is the best of all —

"And your little bluebells, they are here. Do you hear them?"

She laughed.

"I was just going to ask if you could —"

"How soft and sweet your laugh is! You do not know how musical it is, and how your face grows young as you laugh. What did you say?"

"I said nothing. It is impossible to say anything, for there is so much to be said."

"Do you hear how the pine trees are singing over there on the slope? I never heard the forest sing as it does to-night. And here comes our brother the wind. Let us thank God for wind

and weather, for storm and silence, for our sister the moon and all the bright little stars — and for life.”¹——

He became anxious, for she had grown so pale. He drew the little shawl carefully around her.

“You are tired; you must sit perfectly quiet.”

She smiled. “I will think of you.”

She crept closer to him.

“Say something. It seems so good just to hear your voice.”

So he sat and whispered — but only a little so that she might rest the better.

Each time he spoke she smiled.

Suddenly she rose.

“Samuel, there is just one thing more I must ask about.”

He pressed her in his arms.

“You are still Sanpriel,” he whispered.

She asked nothing more.

Wolf came. He pricked up his ears and looked at them intently with his wild brown eyes, then lay down wagging his tail, quite certain that all was as it should be.

——“Now the dew is falling on the earth. The call has come for evening prayers, for the high mass of the setting sun.”

¹ The evening song of St. Francis.

"I hear it," she said, and laid her hand in his. A silver blue haze crept over the ridges. Sweet sounds were wafted over mountain and sea. The forest dissolved into one huge mass of gloom.

They sat there watching the sun as it sank below the dark slope.

The moon came out, low on the horizon and shedding a pale, silvery glow. The beams trembled as though some one were playing upon them.

Suddenly the air felt fresh, like a breath from the land beyond. . . .

"What is it, you blossoms, what is it?"

She looked at him and smiled.

"It is an angel, coming over the earth to give us greeting."

Her eyes grew solemn and her heart swelled within her. It seemed as if it would burst — that she must die. . . .

The heavens were filled with burning gold — with fire which flamed on high, then died away. A sea of red came rolling in — from deepest purple to palest rose in color.

The eternal snows were kindled, and Flyen was tinged with blood.

But above the snow and the mountains, all was dazzlingly clear.

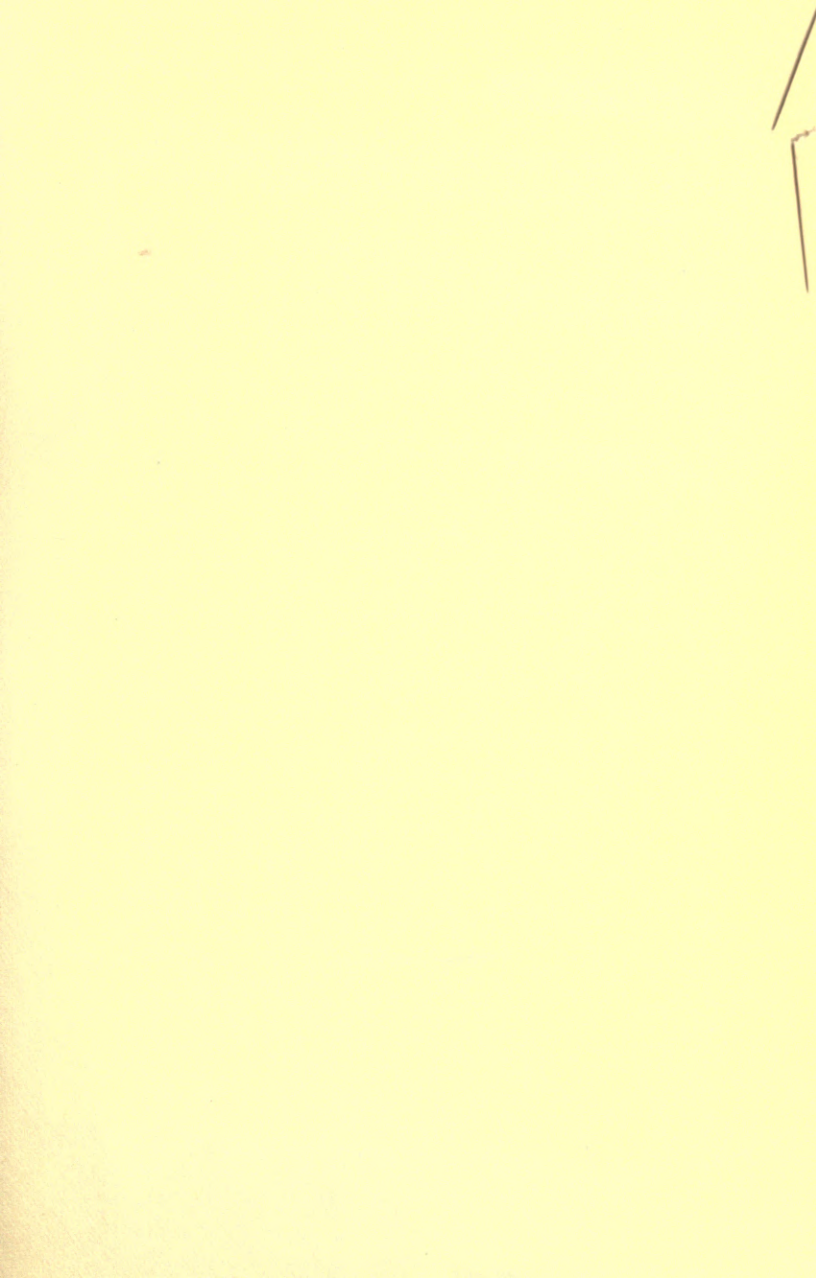
They seemed to look beyond the stars into space — into the transparent depths of infinity.

And flowers floated down about them, rare and delicate blossoms. Wrapped in nameless colors, a figure seemed gliding toward them, as on white wings, coming straight from the far within. . . .

Thora trembled. A fancy seized her.

"Samuel," she whispered, "it is your mother, coming to open for us the gates to the Promised Land."





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